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India's top secret
nuclear submarine

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DECEMBER 18, 2017 ₹60



INDIA TODAY

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RAHUL GANDHI TAKES CHARGE OF THE CONGRESS — FINALLY.
BUT REVIVING THE GRAND OLD PARTY IS A BIG ASK

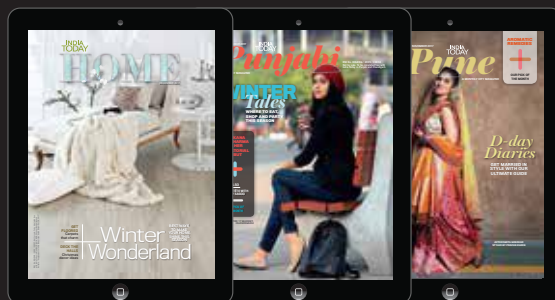
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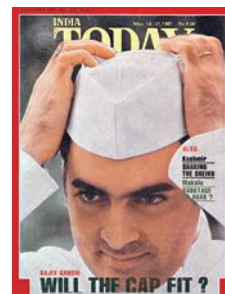
FROM THE

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

In 2005, we asked of Rahul Gandhi, newly-elected MP from Amethi, and clearly his mother Congress president Sonia Gandhi's successor, 'Is he ready?' It was a curious echo of the question we had posed to his late father Rajiv Gandhi, another reluctant politician, in 1981, 'Will the cap fit?' Both men have been well documented by INDIA TODAY, with 13 covers on Rahul and 30 on Rajiv. And rightly so. Whether in power or in opposition, the 132-year-old Indian National Congress is a significant political party, still in control in eight of the country's 29 states, despite Amit Shah's vision of a Congress-*mukt* Bharat. It may not be the default party of power, as Rahul Gandhi once described it, but it is the party that propelled the freedom movement, the economic reforms of 1991 and the social security infrastructure of the UPA years. It is also the party that institutionalised the country's peculiar feudal democracy, making dynasty acceptable at all levels and across all parties. I am often asked whether the present Congress would survive without a Nehru-Gandhi heading it. The simple answer is: it wouldn't.

As the great grandson, grandson and son of prime ministers, Rahul Gandhi should have had power running in his veins. But his political apprenticeship has often been solitary, marked by sudden bursts of activity and long periods of absence, reluctance or disinterest. While he has dithered, India has changed, becoming less tolerant of entitlement. Even as he publicly struggled with the idea of power as poison (having witnessed the assassinations of his grandmother and father), the nation quickly lost patience with him, especially as a confident alternative presented itself, showing no inhibitions in laying claim to authority. The rise of Narendra Modi coincided with the sidelining of Rahul Gandhi, as one who had not only reduced his party's Lok Sabha tally to a historic low in 2014 but also repeatedly put his foot in the mouth.


Despite some mis-steps by the BJP-led government, the Congress has been unable to rebuild itself, losing 15 assembly elections in three years, most critically in its strongholds of Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Haryana and Delhi. An increasingly aloof Sonia Gandhi has seemed all too keen to cede control of the party and



Our May 31, 1981 cover

now it seems Rahul Gandhi is finally ready to take over as president while elections for the Gujarat assembly are under way. At 47, after 13 years in public life, the three-time MP seems to have found his metier, giving speeches in easy Hindustani, showing uncommon wit on social media, and striking alliances with leaders across the spectrum, from Akhilesh Yadav in Uttar Pradesh to Alpesh Thakor in Gujarat.

This may be the beginning of a long climb back into the affections of Indians, both for him and his party. But Rahul has to explain what his politics is: How does his commitment to secularism reconcile with a public display of "soft Hindutva"? And while it is clear he stands for inclusive growth, it is unclear what path he wishes India to take. He has been consistent in espousing the causes of marginalised sections but, beyond some rhetoric and photo opportunities, what is the strategy to make the economic pie grow? Although his party pioneered the liberalisation of the economy, does he still believe that's the way forward? Or does he want an expanded role for government? How will he create new jobs, the lack of which he is complaining about? Simultaneously, he has to re-energise his wilting party by ensuring that the old guard and young Turks work together. The cover story, written by Senior Associate Editor Kaushik Deka, examines whether the reinvented Rahul will be able to pull off victories in eight critical assembly elections next year, and eventually resurrect his party's fortunes in the 2019 Lok Sabha election. If his mother's stewardship of the party for 19 years has taught India anything, it is this—it is always hazardous to write off a politician.


(Aroon Purie)



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COVER STORY

Rahul Raj

The reluctant prince finally takes charge of the Grand ol' Party. Can he pull the Congress out of the abyss it finds itself in?



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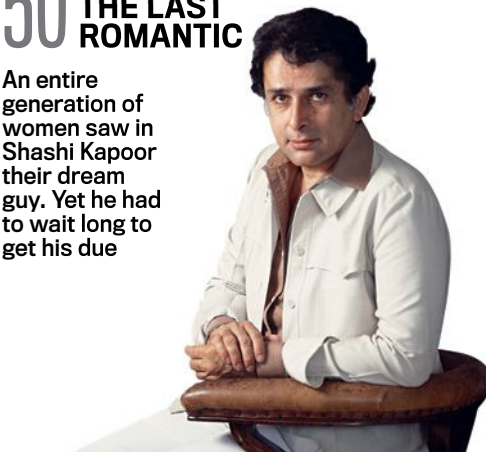
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With the assembly elections looking more close than ever, it's all up to PM Narendra Modi's charisma now, to win over the Gujaratis for the BJP

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An entire generation of women saw in Shashi Kapoor their dream guy. Yet he had to wait long to get his due



Cover photograph by VIKRAM SHARMA

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25 YEARS AFTER BABRI

Looking back at the events in Ayodhya and how it changed the course of the country's history



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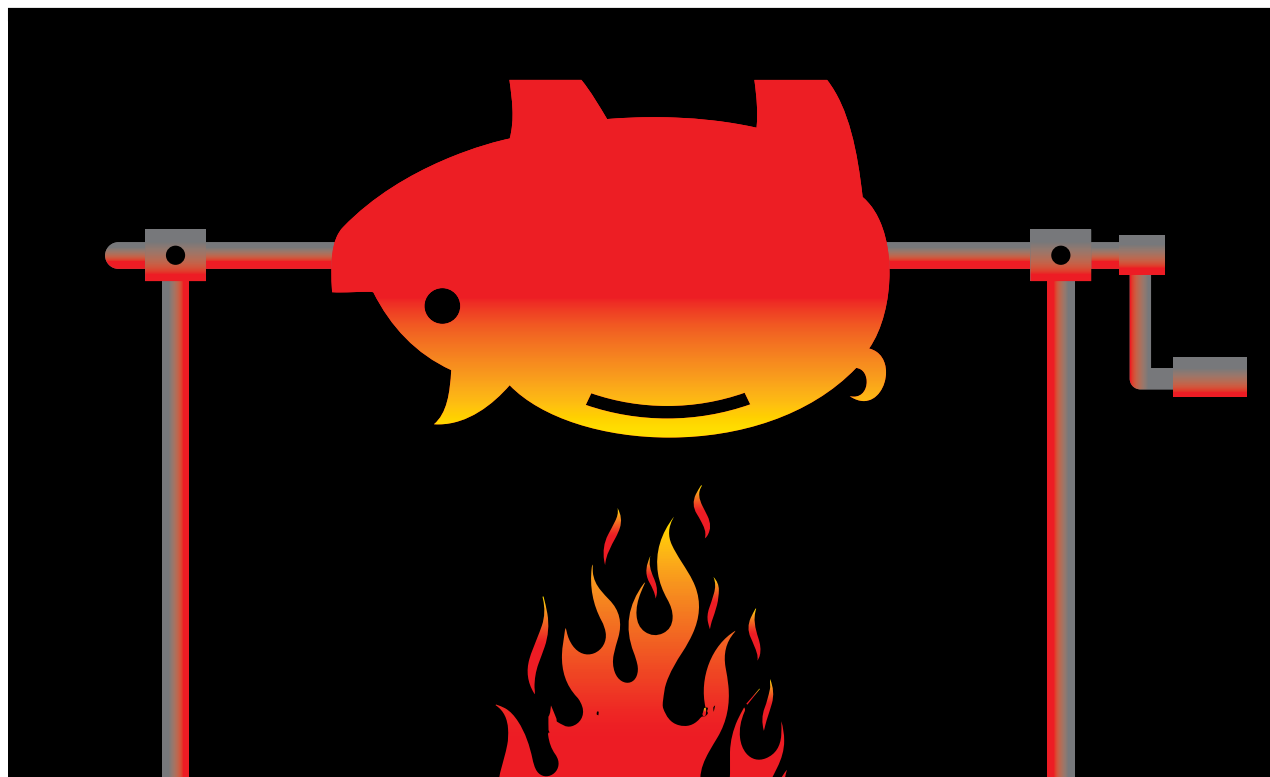


Illustration by TANMOY CHAKRABORTY

FRDI BILL

BANKING ON DEPOSITS

By Shweta Punj

The Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill would possibly have gone through Parliament without a murmur if it weren't for the contentious 'bail-in' clause that has stoked heated debate on whether this constitutes abuse of depositors' rights. It might even prod the government to raise the deposit insurance from the current Rs 1 lakh. In effect, the clause allows distressed banks to be 'bailed in' with depositors' funds rather than being bailed out by the government with taxpayers' money.

In India, bank deposits upto Rs 1 lakh are insured by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC), a subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India. The FRDI bill entitles distressed banks, staring at the prospect of potential bankruptcy, to restructure their deposits—convert them into equity or time deposits or any other instrument banks in such dire straits may deem fit.

The bill, similar to the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016, is focused on companies in the financial sector. It

seeks to provide a resolution framework to deal with bankruptcies in banks, insurance companies and other companies in the financial services sector. It envisages a 'Resolution Corporation' and a 'Corporation Insurance Fund' for deposit insurance, replacing the DICGC, set up in the early 1960s after two banks collapsed.

In India, norms for capital adequacy and liquidity for banks have also worked as early warning signs for the RBI to step in and avert crises. Instances of commercial banks going

bust are few, and at a sign of serious trouble, the RBI has gone ahead and merged a weak bank with a strong bank. In 2014, when the United Bank of India crisis began to unfold, as its tier-1 capital fell below the statutory requirement, the RBI curbed further lending to protect depositors' interests.

However, in recent years there has been a sharp deterioration in the financial health of public sector banks. The RBI's June Financial Stability Report makes sober reading: it warns that the gross bad loan ratio will rise to 10.2 per cent of the total loan book in March 2018 from 9.6 per cent in March 2017. For public sector banks, this ratio could go up to 14.2 per cent by March 2018, up from 11.4 per cent in March 2017.

In his 2016-17 budget speech, Union finance minister Arun Jaitley spoke of a systemic vacuum with regard to bankruptcy situations in financial firms. A committee was set up, under Ajit Tyagi, additional secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, to prepare a draft FRDI bill, on which

the finance ministry sought comments till October 31, before the Cabinet approved it for introduction in Parliament.

Among other issues, the bill has raised questions about how the proposed Resolution Corporation, a parallel body to monitor the health

The government will know that a bill empowering creditors' rights will bolster its image with potential investors

of banks, may impinge on the RBI's mandate to be that watchdog. There is no mention of a revised deposit insurance threshold, and the current Rs 1 lakh limit is abysmally low, especially in a scenario where a 'bail-in' has been legitimised.

Critics of the bill say the government is trying to do too much too soon vis-à-vis distressed banks. "Trying to resolve the NPA problem in six months is taking on too much after years of inaction," says a Mumbai-based economist preferring anonymity. But the government probably has an eye on further improving India's 'ease of doing business' rankings, and will know that a bill empowering creditors' rights will bolster its image with potential investors. It will also prod depositors to consider a bank's risk profile before parking their deposits with it.

In the face of strident criticism, the government has hinted at a review of the bill. Chances are it will be referred to a select committee, officialese for sending it into the freezer. ■



5 QUESTIONS

THE CASE OF THE MUDDY RIVER

Last month, when the water of the Siang river in Arunachal Pradesh suddenly turned black, many in India cried foul, saying it was upstream construction work in China that had muddied the water. A conspiracy theory started doing the rounds: China, it was heard, was planning to divert the water of the Brahmaputra—known as Siang in Arunachal Pradesh and Yarlung Tsangpo in China. China denied the allegations, saying that it would never damage its own river. Kaushik Deka caught up with PEMA KHANDU, chief minister of Arunachal Pradesh, to get the official position of the government on the controversy.

Illustration by SIDDHANT JUMDE

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THE AADHAAR ANOMALY

According to the latest figures collected by the Unique Identification Authority of India, several states now have reached saturation point in the distribution of Aadhaar cards with entire populations and more now registered. The explanation for how over 100 per cent of people in a given state can have Aadhaar cards is that the population figures come from 2015, so any excess is a result of population growth. More sinisterly though, analysts contend that some figures are so anomalous, as in Delhi, that there might be a large number of fake Aadhaar cards in circulation. The Aadhaar card, apparently voluntary but mandatory, is being pushed by the government as ubiquitous. But are all the gremlins ironed out and will the government take questions on those issues?

Q. Is this the first time the Siang has turned black?

Pema Khandu When this matter came up, I directed the Deputy Commissioners of East Siang and Upper Siang districts to send a detailed report. According to their reports, the flow level in the Siang appears to be normal compared with flow levels observed—and tested—earlier. But the report also noted that the river was muddy with forest debris, which is very unusual. We have sent soil and water samples from the Siang for testing; the reports are awaited.

Q. What will your government do next?

PK I have written to the Union home minister, seeking his intervention and necessary action. I have also personally visited Yingkiong and Pasighat to inspect the river. We will plan our next moves based on the laboratory reports, and after consultation with the Government of India.

Q. Some reports blame it on construction work in China. What's your government's take on these reports?

PK Nothing can be said at this moment... we can't point fingers at others till we have concrete evidence. We have full faith in our prime minister and his team of dynamic cabinet colleagues. If any mischief from across the border is

proven, I'm confident the Government of India will tackle the issue efficiently.

Q. There are several reports stating that China is planning to divert the Brahmaputra. Have you been in touch with the Centre about this?

PK I have seen the reports, but there's no official word on this. If we go by the reports, the matter is grave. Since it's in the realm of external affairs, I'm sure the Union government and PM will do what's necessary.

Q. Dams have been proposed in Arunachal to harness the state's hydropower. On how many of these is work currently in progress?

PK The hydropower potential of our state is estimated to be around 60,000 MW. Our government has a scientific approach to harnessing this clean energy for sustainable development, in consultation with the people. By early 2018, the 110 MW Pare hydroelectric project and the 600 MW Kameng hydroelectric project are expected to come on stream. This is the first significant step towards realising the hydropower dream of our people. Other projects are in various stages of implementation; these projects will remove misapprehensions and help us shape a collective progressive vision. ■

PULLQUOTE

"BUT IN A DEMOCRACY, ELECTIONS ARE HELD. I OPENLY INVITE (SHEHZAD) POONAWALA TO FILE THE NOMINATION AND CONTEST."

Congress leader and seemingly chief sycophant **MANI SHANKAR AIYAR** appended these lines to an ill-conceived commentary about the difference between the 'democratic' Congress party and the patrilineal Mughals. Never one to spurn an open goal, prime minister Narendra Modi twisted Aiyar's remarks to "congratulate the Congress on their 'Aurangzebi raj'." That said, what was Aiyar thinking? Can a process in which Rahul Gandhi is made Congress president without a hint of a challenge be considered healthy?



1,190,663,350

INDIANS, OR 99% OF THE POPULATION, HAVE AADHAAR CARDS, SAID UIDAI DASHBOARD ON DECEMBER 5

130%

OF PEOPLE LIVING IN DELHI NOW HAVE AADHAAR CARDS. THOUGH A UIDAI TABLE FROM NOVEMBER 30 PUTS THE FIGURE AT 117%

₹9,406 crore

SPENT BY UIDAI THROUGH TO NOVEMBER 2017 ON THE AADHAAR PROJECT

20

NUMBER OF STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES WITH 100% OR MORE PEOPLE SIGNED UP TO AADHAAR, SAYS UIDAI MAP. BUT ONLY 8, ACCORDING TO UIDAI TABLE ON NOVEMBER 30

210

CENTRAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT WEBSITES PUBLICLY REVEALED AADHAAR NUMBERS UNTIL THE UIDAI INTERVENED, AN RTI REVEALED IN NOVEMBER

135 million

OR 8% ASSAMESE HAVE AADHAAR CARDS, SAYS UIDAI, COMPARED WITH 154% IN LAKSHADWEEP



RAMAN JIT
SINGH CHIMA

GUEST COLUMN

FOR A WEB WITHOUT PREJUDICE

On November 28, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) issued its outcome report from its consultation paper on network neutrality, “the result of a long, multi-stage process” over the past three years. TRAI’s report completed another pillar on the regulatory structure it began building in February 2016, when it issued its Differential Data Pricing Regulations which banned ‘zero-rating’ arrangements between telecom service providers and internet firms (such as Facebook’s Free Basics programme, partnered with Reliance Communications in India).

TRAI’s most recent recommendations focus on direct forms of technical discrimination that telecom service providers could use to preferentially treat web content to favour their own monetary benefits over those of users. TRAI has recommended that service provider licences be amended by the government to include an explicit ban on preferential treatment of web content. Telcos cannot throttle, block or otherwise preferentially treat certain web content over others by speeding up or slowing down how their subscribers access it. TRAI recommended that certain exceptions be allowed, but has pushed back on lobbying pressure to craft loopholes. It has indicated that ‘specialised services’ should not be included within the scope of its prohibition of preferential treatment (potentially, for example, IPTV), and that operators must ensure that their deployment does not impact the provisioning of general internet access and that they cannot become a backdoor means to undermine net neutrality. Some industry interests called for a vaguely worded exception for Internet of Things (IoT) devices, which TRAI rejected while noting that some IoT devices may require specialised services and others may be designed to operate on the public, open internet. TRAI has also said that service providers can perform reasonable ‘traffic management practices’ that might involve some amount of preferential treatment, but has left the definition of such practices to be performed by itself in the future.

TRAI’s recommendations are progressive, but do not represent a crossing of the finishing line yet. Since TRAI chose to issue its report in the form of recommendations, it now falls upon the department of telecom (DoT)—administered by telecom secretary Aruna Sundararajan and

led by Union communications minister Manoj Sinha—to study TRAI’s recommendations, indicate whether they accept them in totality or only in part, and then actually carry out the implementation. While TRAI has disappointingly chosen to wait upon the DoT, it has interestingly stressed that its current recommendations are “without prejudice” to its powers under the TRAI Act—hinting that it reserves the right to issue regulations if the DoT does not act.

TRAI’s recommendations are striking given the repeated opposition mounted by parts of the telecom industry. Several telecom firms and the industry associations representing them sought to argue that not only should TRAI not take any action to further safeguard network neutrality—arguing

that there was ‘no market failure’ justifying further action—but that it should also reverse its February 2016 landmark decision to globally lead on regulating zero-rating practices. Several telecom industry interests also sought to bolster their opposition to net neutrality by citing how, post the Trump inauguration, US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) chairman Ajit Pai had embraced the arguments of big telecom’s lobbyists to dismantle the landmark Open Internet Order issued by it during the Obama administration to safeguard

net neutrality. To its credit, TRAI seems to recognise that the Trump administration in the US is an outlier amongst progressive democracies when it comes to safeguarding our global, open internet. In Europe, net neutrality remains enshrined in law by the Telecom Single Market framework passed by the European Union in October 2015, and it has been strengthened by comprehensive implementation guidelines issued by BEREC—the body that comprises the national regulators for telecom and electronic communications across Europe’s nation states. Nations like Canada have reinforced their network neutrality frameworks, and taken India’s lead on preventing the rise of economic discrimination on the internet via practices such as zero-rating. ■



The author is Global Policy Director at the international non-profit, Access Now, and co-founder, Internet Freedom Foundation



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The week in social media

@ShougatDasgupta

Deshdrohis Unite

For all the confidence that the BJP projects, and arguably should project, about retaining power in Gujarat, party leaders are becoming increasingly jittery as the elections draw near. Gujarat chief minister Vijay Rupani, unable to talk in detail about his own political achievements, has been relying instead on wrestling Bogeymen. Writer Arundhati Roy flustered Rupani by donating Rs 3 lakh to young Dalit leader Jignesh Mevani who is crowdfunding his independent campaign. At a rally on December 1, Rupani accused Mevani of being a "JNU product". While on social media, BJP bots threw around favoured pejoratives such as "commies" and "anti-nationals" and muttered darkly about the "liberal ecosystem." Of course, neither Mevani nor Roy have ever been to JNU, unlike many senior members of the Gujarat bureaucracy. ■



Temple Politics

Little in life is more risible than hashtag activism, and a few wasted minutes checking out #Ayodhya, for instance, will show you why. Can armchair warriors really not see how ridiculous they are? Subramanian Swamy is the chief rabble rouser, but most people will have nodded in recognition at a recent tweet about how "Buddhu" (i.e.



Rahul Gandhi) would "rush" to Ayodhya to witness the building of a Ram temple if "election imminent". Rahul's recent temple tour and the farcical "Hindu, non-Hindu" kerfuffle doesn't fill anyone with confidence about the quality of public debate or that principles rather than expedience is at the heart of Indian public life. Even the high-minded attempt by prominent filmmakers and activists among others to involve themselves in Supreme Court proceedings is about keeping the peace rather than honest discussion. ■

Faceplant Challenge

Even if you were one of those people who poured a bucket of ice water over their heads and did a wobbly mannequin pose with your friends, do not accept the latest viral challenge. An American cheerleader has racked up hundreds of thousands of views by stepping onto an imaginary box with one foot before stepping over it with the other. It doesn't matter how agile you think you are, you will fall. ■

A LESSON IN EDUCATION

Five editions of *The Wealth of Nations* (the original one) were published within 13 years, at a time when readership must have been a fraction of what it is today. Bhalla changes his mind as fast as Adam Smith; but it is unlikely that this book will go into a second edition, for he writes a new book when he gets a new idea. Those who appreciate the elegant old classic may not be enchanted by the breathless prose of the new work. But they need not reflect so long over it, for it races on its hobby horses,

leaping from saddle to saddle.

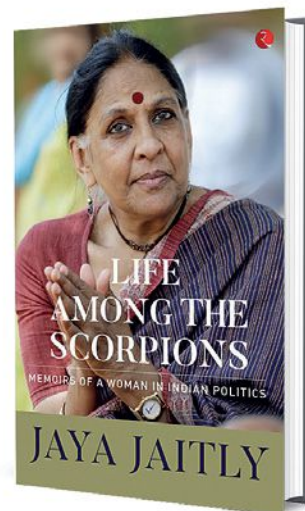
That is fun; Bhalla's brilliant ideas are exciting, intriguing, and sometimes thought-provoking. And thankfully, they do not form an unbroken chain of logical arguments; so it is possible to read a chapter or often even a chart and stop to think over it or go off to a party. But that also makes it difficult to say what Bhalla is driving at.

However, the book does have a central idea. The backbone of Smith's *Wealth of Nations* was the idea that

STING IN THE TALE

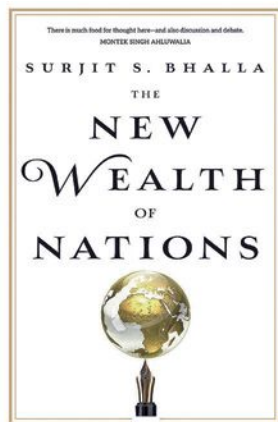
Of late, there's been a spate of memoirs, biographies and autobiographies (the latter often ghost-written hagiographies of a self-congratulatory kind). Perhaps they provide forgettable has-beens an opportunity to justify their past actions and briefly reconjure their own Camelot. Jaya Jaitly's memoir is written in a different register: she gracefully acknowledges that women like her, born in elite families, educated in exclusive boarding schools and universities are de-toothed early on. She would like the reader to believe that the scorpions she encountered in her political life destroyed her political career.

While that may be true, what



LIFE AMONG THE SCORPIONS:
Memoirs of a Woman in Indian Politics
by Jaya Jaitly
Published by Rupa
352 pages
₹ 595

division of labour leads to a rise in productivity and incomes. He wrote before the industrial revolution, which introduced a new source of growth, namely technical progress; and initially, technical progress was embodied in capital. The countries that embodied technology in capital and learnt how to improve technology and accumulate capital raced ahead. For Bhalla, it is not the stock of knowledge that is primary; it is its distribution across the work force. The distribution is determined by education: education, according to him, is the new wealth of nations. And he believes it is also a great leveller: there is a limit



**THE NEW
WEALTH OF
NATIONS**
by Surjit S. Bhalla
Simon & Schuster
207 pages
₹ 599

to how much education a human can absorb, so a country can spread education evenly across its people. Education turns people middle class; a nation becomes wealthy when education turns everyone into a bourgeois. Marx looked forward to proletarians wiping out the bourgeoisie; Bhalla waits for proletarians to be educated and turned into the bourgeoisie. He points out that the fact that workers are more often male than female, is a prime cause of gender inequality; this too will wear out.

While he spins out this argument, Bhalla often goes off at a tangent. For instance, he relates how he was cured

of leftism. As a student in UCLA, he was in favour of a minimum wage for Mexican agricultural workers in California until a teacher made him realise it would reduce their employment. There are a number of such irrelevant stories. They may irritate conventional scholars used to orderly, logical development of arguments. But they would be fascinated by unexpected turns in novels, and they would wait impatiently for the next leap in a circus; if they bring the same expectations to this book, they will enjoy it—not necessarily from end to end, but from time to time. ■

—Ashok V. Desai

comes across in Jaitly's memoir is that she was unable to balance her political ambitions with her deep commitment to promoting and creating a network of craftspeople and handloom workers. By temperament and upbringing, she is a gentlewoman blessed with a great sense of aesthetics and taste. Her work in setting up Gurjari and later her sterling contribution to setting up Dilli Haat are proof of her singular talent in this area. Had she made that her constituency rather than hanging on to the ragtag bunch of forgettable socialists, she would have been able to use all the trade union lessons she imbibed from her mentor George Fernandes. Sadly, her closeness to Fernandes made her a perfect punching bag for his rivals so that she was dragged into every political battle he fought. After his political downfall, she alone shouldered the attacks from the scorpions whose tails are ever-ready to sting. Indeed, a sting operation was her final political undoing, literally!

Her soft, persuasive voice makes compelling reading, interspersed as it is with a near-unimaginable picture of what Kashmir was like in the early '60s when she went there as a young civil servant's wife who tried to survive on his salary of Rs 550. The memoir jumps back and forth to underline one constant theme: she was the child of a Malayali matrilinear clan, and the bland life of a civil servant's wife

**Her closeness to
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made her restless and unhappy. Her prose bristles with outrage when she recalls the poverty and neglect of the craftspeople she loved both in Kashmir as well as in Gujarat. Balancing this fiery champion with her timidity as an unpaid aide-de-camp to Fernandes is a constant challenge to the reader. Who is the real Jaya Jaitly?

One reason for this is that India has had its share of feisty women who have tamed powerful and hostile political colleagues, whipping them into voiceless submission. The Nehru-Gandhi women, Mamata Banerjee, Mayawati or Jayalalitha are fine examples of women who've held their own and developed their own poison to decimate the vipers that tried to hold them back. Even Sonia Gandhi, she who has always had to contend with her foreign birth, gave as good as she got. So there is much to admire in the life revealed by this book but, equally, there are unanswered questions too. ■

—Ira Pande





EXPOSURE

JUST NOT CRICKET

You normally think of cricket as a healthy pursuit, players gambolling in the sunshine. The game is more strenuous now, with batsmen sprinting between wickets and outfielders diving to prevent boundaries. Last week, though, Sri Lankan players were throwing up, collapsing and complaining to match officials during their Test match in Delhi not because of exertion or the pressure of facing an in-form Indian team but the noxious haze that shrouds the capital. Why should visiting teams be expected to play in these conditions? The National Green Tribunal admonished cricket officials and the Delhi government for letting the match go on. Instead of bracing cricket on bright December days, the players might as well have been batting and bowling in a smoke-filled pub in 1970s England.



PANKAJ NANGIA/ MAIL TODAY

GLASSHOUSE

HOLDING THE FORT

With most major Union ministers and BJP functionaries, including party president Amit Shah, busy campaigning in Gujarat, it has fallen upon the party's general secretaries to hold the fort in New Delhi. Part of the newly set up Central Election Monitoring Cell, P. Muralidhar Rao, Kailash Vijayvargiya, Arun Singh and Anil Jain are monitoring the Gujarat campaign from the party's 11, Ashoka Road, headquarters. They hope to avoid the criticism made during the Bihar campaign in 2015 that resources were unevenly distributed. Except that the Gujarat state unit is piling them with strange requests, from laddoos to water bottles to breakfast.

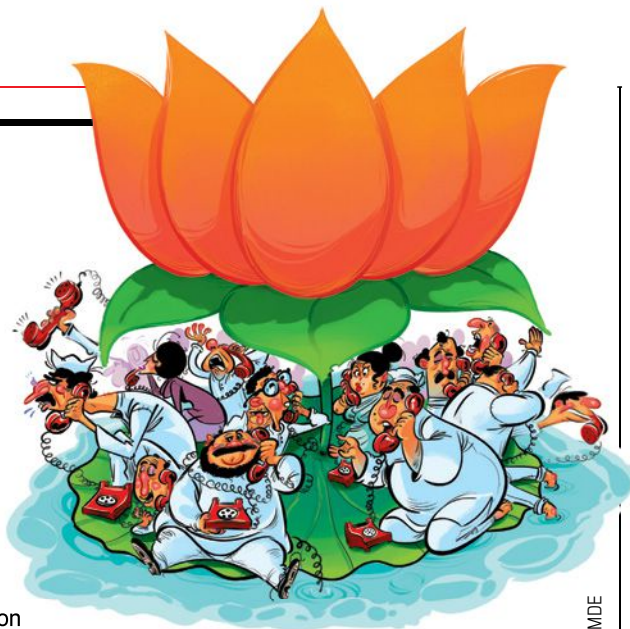


Illustration by SIDDHANT JUMDE

CALLING DIDI'S TUNE?



When Akhilesh Yadav called on West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's two-room residence in Kalighat recently, he came bearing with him a gift for her: a shawl in a shade of peacock blue, Didi's favourite colour. There was much bonhomie between them, Didi treating Akhilesh like a favourite nephew. Akhilesh, too, returned the favour, blasting the Modi government, as soon as he emerged out of the meeting, of tampering with EVMs, an allegation Didi has been making for a long time now. Precursor to a mahagathabandhan for 2019?

No Fast Friends or Foes in Politics



NITISH KUMAR



LALU PRASAD YADAV

Once brothers-in-arms, they sat 10 sofas away from each other and avoided eye contact at the wedding of Sushil Kumar Modi's son



SIDDHARTHA NATH SINGH



MUKUL ROY

In 2014, Singh was taunting Roy over Saradha, calling out 'Bhaag Mukul Bhaag (Run Mukul run)'. Recently, however, they shook hands and exchanged bouquets



TEA, TOTALLY

When he met Ratan Tata in Mumbai on November 29, Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal invited him for the global investment conference in Guwahati this February. The patriarch seemed only too game for any *chai pe charcha*, gently reminding Sonowal of the Tata Group's tea gardens in the state.

AATI KYA KHANDALA?

What better way to think things through than do so at a hill station? This is precisely what Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis did, when he and his bureaucrats retired to Khandala between December 1 and 2. The two-day sojourn came at a time when the administration stands accused of failing the CM on a number of issues such as farm loan waivers and revenue losses. The trip was meant to brainstorm on the planning and implementation of schemes. The cool climes would surely have helped.





POINT OF VIEW

GDP: Read with Caution

By Devangshu Datta

The macro-economic data for July-September 2017 (Q2) indicates that the Indian economy may be pulling out of a trough after five successive quarters of lower GDP growth. GDP grew at 6.3 per cent in Q2, having fallen to 5.7 per cent in Q1.

The pullback is attributed to the manufacturing sector climbing 7 per cent year-on-year versus Jul-Sep 2016. This is a considerable improvement over the 1.2 per cent growth in Q1. The other big gainer was mining, which rose by 5.5 per cent after declining in Q1.

Agriculture remained in the doldrums, though, with growth at 1.7 per cent, which was even lower than the 2.3 per cent logged in Q1. Gross Fixed Capital Formation, which is a key indicator for private investment, grew at 4.7 per cent during Q2, which was better than the anaemic 1.6 per cent of GFCF growth in Q1.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley hailed these numbers, asserting that the disruption caused by GST and demonetisation was over. The numbers did boost sentiment along with other positive data points like higher automobile sales, the Moody's upgrade of India's sovereign rating, the jump in World Bank Ease of Doing Business rankings etc. At the other end of the political spectrum, former finance minister, P. Chidambaram called this a "pause in the falling trend of growth" and Dr Manmohan Singh said he thought the ill-effects of demonetisation had not yet been fully purged.

The manufacturing pickup indicates that the "destocking" that preceded GST was transient. In April-June, manufacturers cut back production and sold off inventory for fear of being hit by GST disruption. "Restocking" has apparently happened in Q2, with manufacturers ramping up production.

These are preliminary estimates and the error factors may be pretty high. GDP includes net tax collections, which are fuzzy, unknown numbers for Q2, given the complexity of the new GST system.

The GST involves offsets and credits up and down the value chain, and we don't know what net collections will be. This could work both

ways—there may be a bump up or a drawdown in final estimates.

According to Chief Statistician T.C.A. Anant, the MoSPI used sales tax collections from items kept outside the GDP net to make a proxy estimate of likely tax collections. To add to complications, service tax was subsumed into GST (at a higher rate of 18 per cent GST, versus the earlier 15 per cent for service tax) and ran into similar calculation problems. Since services contribute over 50 per cent to GDP, the proxy calculations there may also have big errors.

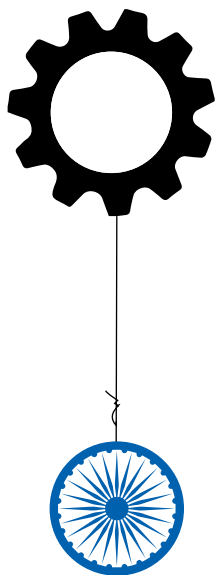
Another factor that is hard to estimate is consumption, due to the seasonal effect of festival. Durga Puja (Navratri as North Indians call it) and Diwali are periods when household consumption spikes. At the same time, these are holidays, so industrial production drops. Since these festivals don't fall in the same calendar months every year, distortions are caused. This year, Durga Puja was in September, while it fell in October last year. Festival consumption in September 2017 would have been higher compared with the 'normal' level of September 2016. So we can't assess if consumption has genuinely improved.

There were a few disquieting data points too. Trade deficit expanded in Q2. Exports grew a bit, but imports shot up. This is a sign GST did cause disruptions—consumers turned to imports to meet demand for items that Indian manufacturers could not meet because value-chains were hit.

A second disquieting data point is the high fiscal deficit. About 96 per cent of the budgeted full-year fiscal deficit had been spent by October—the government was spending to keep growth ticking over, through the GST disruption. But it doesn't have much leeway to continue with this strategy unless it's prepared to let the fiscal deficit shoot up to unacceptable levels.

The GDP figures are encouraging. But they must be interpreted with caution. The final estimates could go either way—higher or lower.

Devangshu Datta is a financial columnist and business journalist



With all the spending to keep growth ticking over through the GST disruption, 96% of the full-year fiscal deficit target has been reached in 6 months

PUNJAB: PURGE AT
THE TEMPLE
PG 16

STATES

BIHAR: FLUSHED
DOWN
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KERALA: POLITICS
OVER A FLOWER
PG 18

WEST BENGAL:
FRINGE BENEFITS
PG 19



MANEESH AGNIHOTRI

▲ **PLAYING IN THE V**
CM Adityanath (centre) with
other state leaders after
the election victory

UTTAR PRADESH

YOGI GETS IN WITH THE BIG BOYS

The BJP's performance in the civic polls gives Adityanath the stretch room to follow his own development agenda

By Ashish Misra

LUCKNOW

December 1, the day poll results for Uttar Pradesh's 652 urban local bodies were declared, was one of those rare occasions when Yogi Adityanath did not venture out of his 5, Kalidas Marg residence in Lucknow. Not till after 3 p.m., that is, when the BJP was officially declared winner in 14 of the 16 big city municipal corporations. Only then did the chief minister emerge to celebrate the victory with other party leaders.

Riding piggyback on a campaign in which Adityanath crisscrossed the state addressing

WHO GOT THE BIG SLICE?

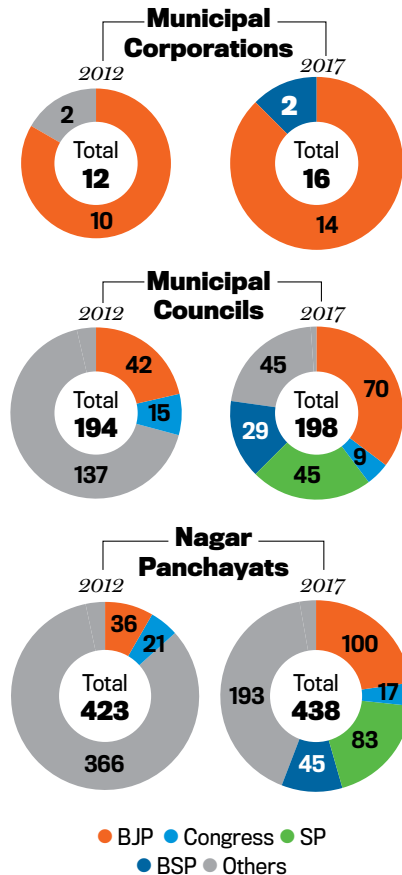
How the parties fared in sending up their mayoral/ chairman candidates in UP's civic polls

more than 30 public meetings, the BJP won all the four new corporations—Ayodhya, Saharanpur, Firozabad and Mathura—besides existing older corporations in Lucknow, Varanasi, Allahabad, Kanpur, Gorakhpur, Agra, Bareilly, Ghaziabad, Moradabad and Jhansi. The BJP's Rishikesh Upadhyay trounced the SP's Gulshan Bindu in Ayodhya's first mayoral poll. Significantly, though, the BSP succeeded in wresting Meerut and Aligarh, two critical western UP corporations earlier held by the BJP.

Although nowhere close to the "landslide victory" party president Amit Shah has claimed, the BJP has certainly improved its showing in these civic polls. Besides the 14 mayoral positions, 596 of the 1,299 municipal corporators now belong to the party. At 45.9 per cent of the total corporation seats, that is nearly 15 per cent more than what the BJP had won in the 2012 civic polls.

It is notable, though, that the BJP has been doing well in the big cities. Even in 2012, the party had won 10 of the then existing 12 municipal corporations. The picture—and both Chief Minister Adityanath and the party leadership know this—is less rosy for the party in the smaller municipal council towns and municipal or nagar panchayats. What's comforting for the BJP is that it remains miles ahead of the scattered opposition. It's true that the BSP has made significant inroads, particularly in western Uttar Pradesh—and even after Mayawati allowed local leaders to steer the poll campaign—but analysts like Banaras Hindu University social scientist Ajit Kumar contend: "This was by playing the Dalit-Muslim card and essentially at the cost of the Samajwadi Party."

Neither the Akhilesh Yadav-led SP nor Rahul Gandhi's in-absentia tutelage of the Congress brought either party any worthwhile gains. It



The SP and BSP did not contest the 2012 local bodies elections

even allowed Adityanath a moment to gloat: "Those talking of defeating the BJP in Gujarat, lost the election in Amethi"—citing the Congress's ignominious defeat in both Jais and Gauriganj, the two municipal council towns in Rahul's Lok Sabha bastion. The Samajwadi Party too, despite winning 45 municipal council chairmanships and 83 in nagar panchayats, had to bear the embarrassment of losing the mayoral poll in Firozabad, represented by national general secretary Ram Gopal Yadav's son Akshay Yadav in the Lok Sabha.

Like every earlier civic poll in UP, independents fared very well, particularly in the councils and nagar panchayats. Besides 224 corporators, 225 independent candidates were elected chairmen of municipal councils and nagar panchayats; and 7,255 were elected as councillors and panchayat members. While many of them have known party affiliations, the real picture about which way the independents will swing will emerge in the coming weeks.

A day after the results were declared, Adityanath flew to Delhi to meet PM Modi to receive what BJP insiders describe as "kudos for a job well done". The victory is considered a boost for Adityanath, with the national leadership now likely to repose more faith in him and allow him a freer hand to manage the state. The immediate effect is that he is likely to go in for a cabinet expansion to fill the 13 vacancies that remain. It will also give him the opportunity to review the performance of his current ministers in the local bodies they were put in charge of for the election. This will include an analysis of its inconsistent performance in these elections and shoring up representation in areas where the BJP has done badly.

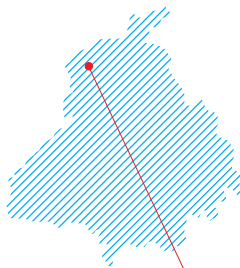
With barely over a year to go for Lok Sabha 2019, Adityanath is racing against time to fill attention gaps pertaining to small municipal towns. Besides plans to competitively rank individual districts on various performance parameters, including 'ease of doing business' on the lines of the Centre, he has directed officials to draw up detailed development plans for semi-urban areas. He has also asked the state public works department for a report on the state of the roads in such areas. The Yogi seems to be coming to grips with the nitty-gritty of state administration and the task of managing a big state like Uttar Pradesh. ■

PUNJAB

PURGE AT THE TEMPLE

Sikh apex body SGPC sees a near complete overhaul

By Asit Jolly



AMRITSAR

On November 29, the historic Teja Singh Samundari Hall, at the far end of Amritsar's Golden Temple complex, saw more than the usual intrigue that accompanies annual elections to the executive of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC)—the apex committee that controls most Sikh shrines and institutions.

In a move that surprised everyone, the 170-member SGPC general house effected a purge, dropping all but two of the 15-person executive panel, including incumbent president Kirpal Singh Badungar, a long-time loyalist of the Badal clan. Gobind Singh Longowal, foster son of the early 1980s Shiromani Akali Dal president Harchand Singh Longowal, was anointed the new president.

But the 60-year-old Longowal's appointment to head Sikhism's most powerful body could turn out to be problematic. Although he entered politics as an SAD nominee in the post-Punjab Accord assembly polls in 1985 and had served as a minister in the 1997-2002 SAD-BJP government, the new president has virtually no experience of gurudwara affairs. Furthermore, it's the first time in the SGPC's history that a man who was declared 'tankhaiya' (excommunicated) by the Akal Takht (the community's supreme

religious seat) *jathedar* (head priest) has been picked to head the body.

Longowal, who lost this February's assembly polls from Sunam (Sangrur), was among a group of SAD, AAP and Congress leaders 'excommunicated' for seeking the support of the now convicted Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh. This, notably, was despite a prevailing Akal Takht *hukumnama* (religious edict), forbidding all Sikhs from any contact with the Sacha Sauda.

Interestingly, while *jathedar* Giani Gurbachan Singh defends Longowal's elevation, claiming he had "apologised

and been pardoned", the new SGPC chief now insists he had "never solicited the dera's assistance".

Given the predictable storm, the appointment has fuelled speculation over why the SAD leadership—former chief minister Parkash Singh Badal and son Sukhbir Badal are widely seen as driving the SGPC—picked Longowal. Political analyst Jagtar Singh believes it's a tactical move by the Badals to retain their supremacy in the wake of the assembly poll debacle earlier this year. SAD insiders point to a party core committee meeting in Badal village shortly after the defeat where

>
AT THE GATES
New SGPC president Gobind Singh Longowal (centre) with supporters at the Golden temple



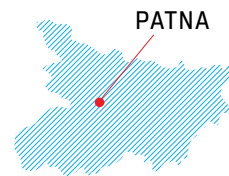


PRABJHOT GILL

Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, ex-Union minister and the SAD's face in Sangrur district, reportedly demanded that Sukhbir accept responsibility for the defeat. "Longowal is also from Sangrur and this could be Sukhbir's bid to cut Dhindsa to size," Jagtar Singh says.

But perhaps more than showing potential rebels their place, analysts say that out of power, it was critical for the SAD leadership to have someone "pliable" at the helm of the SGPC. Although the outgoing president, the 75-year-old Kirpal Singh Badungar, is a longstanding Badal loyalist, apparently he had of late begun to grow a spine. ■

BIHAR



Flushed Down

Yet another fake beneficiaries scam in the state, this time in toilets for the Swachh Bharat Mission

By Amitabh Srivastava



< **TANKED**

Main accused Vinay Sinha after his arrest on Nov. 28

It's raising quite a stink. A probe ordered by Patna district magistrate Sanjay Agarwal has unearthed a scam involving officials of the state public health engineering department (PHED) who allegedly misappropriated Rs 15 crore meant for construction of toilets in poor homes under the Centre's Swachh Bharat Mission. Carried out between May 1 and June 16, 2016, the reported swindle may have gone undetected but for an internal audit this September, which found procedural irregularities in the withdrawal of funds—Rs 15 crore had been transferred in a month in violation of norms. Alerted, Agarwal ordered a physical verification of the toilets and individual beneficiaries.

State government officers, NGOs and bankers were allegedly in cahoots. The main accused, executive engineer Vinay Kumar Sinha, and PHED accountant Biteshwar Prasad roped in four NGOs—Adi Shakti Sewa Sansthan, Maa Sarveshwari Seva Sansthan, Satyam Shivam Kala Kendra (Patna) and Shiv Seva Sansthan (Maner)—to siphon off the money. Prasad reportedly issued over 200 cheques and Shiv Kumar Jha, a deputy manager of the State Bank of India, facilitated the transfer of money to the NGOs.

And in a routine that is all too familiar now in Bihar, fake beneficiaries were listed to show how the funds were spent. The NGOs, after deducting their share, actually transferred the remainder back to Sinha and Prasad's bank accounts. Preliminary inquiries reveal that Sinha took Rs 4.65 crore while Prasad received Rs 20 lakh. On the run since early November, Sinha was finally arrested from a hotel in Deoria (Uttar Pradesh) on November 28. He has reportedly confessed and given investigators details of properties worth more than Rs 100 crore, including 40 flats in Patna and elsewhere. Patna SSP Manu Maharaj says given the huge wealth he has amassed, police are now looking into the possibility of Sinha's involvement in other scams also. ■

₹ **15**

CRORE

misappropriated by PHED officials in collusion with bank officers and NGOs

3,200

HECTARES

Land set aside for the kurinji sanctuary. Parts of it are now being contested by land sharks and title holders



KERALA

Politics over a Flower

The neelakurinji, which will bloom again in 2018, is at the heart of an intense land battle in the Munnar hills

By Jeemon Jacob

The *neelakurinji* (strobilanthes kunthianus), a plant endemic to Kerala's Munnar hills, which is due for its once-in-12 years flowering in July 2018, is back at the heart of intense politicking in the state.

Back in 2006, the then Left Front government led by V.S. Achuthanandan had proclaimed 3,200 hectares of the neelakurinji habitat in Munnar as a sanctuary on the lines of the country's national parks. This came after over a million people flocked to witness the colourful spectacle. While

environmentalists hailed the move, local owners and land sharks met it with protests. Under pressure, Achuthanandan agreed to exclude title-holders of land from the kurinji sanctuary.

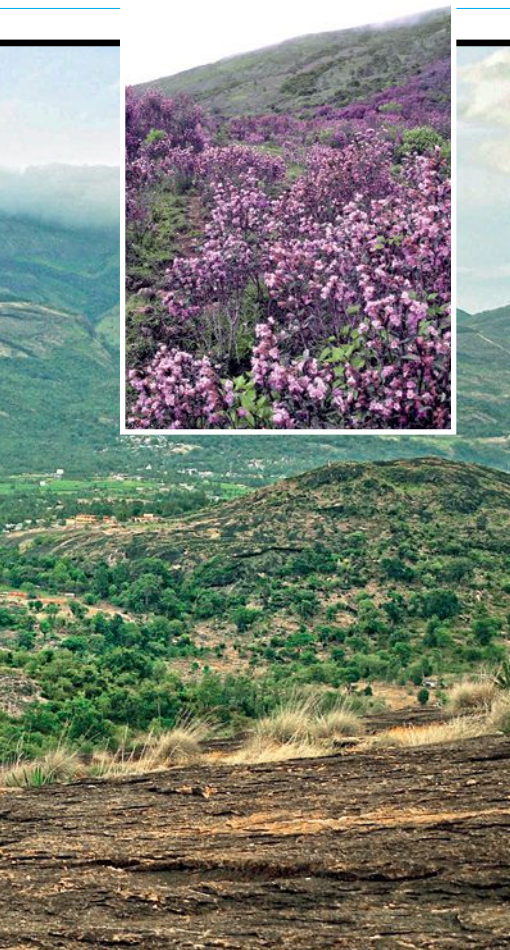
Among those who benefitted was Idukki MP Joyce George and his family who claimed ownership of 58 acres. Like him, many other politicians also gained. However, early this November, the Left Front MP's title was cancelled after it was found to be illegal. Former principal chief conservator of forests V.S. Varghese says fake land records

IDUKKI

are common in the area and verification is often impossible because of the criminal-politician-bureaucrat nexus.

The kurinji sanctuary was a forgotten episode with previous LDF and UDF governments keeping mum for over a decade. That was until Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan convened a meeting to prepare for the 2018 neelakurinji bloom. The tourism department mooted an extensive 'green campaign' to draw tourists to Munnar.

The exercise brought to the fore all the tangled issues once again. The CPI, with 19 MLAs and in charge of the revenue and forest departments, took the position that "only legal title holders would be excluded from the sanctuary area". But CPI(M) minister M.M. Mani, who's from Idukki, is insisting that all *pattayas* (titles) must be excluded without verification. The contrary stands within the ruling co-



^ LAND LOCKED

An encroached plot in Munnar; (inset) the kurinji in bloom

aliation prompted the CM to constitute a three-member cabinet sub-committee to visit Munnar and talk to title holders.

Opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala of the Congress sees the panel as an “attempt to scuttle the kurinji sanctuary to benefit the land mafia”. Interestingly, the BJP is the only party with no apparent stake in protecting the encroachers. Clearly spotting a political opportunity, state chief Kummanam Rajasekharan has petitioned the National Green Tribunal against the rush of illegal encroachments in Munnar. “The CPI(M) is destroying the ecologically fragile region,” he says.

A trifle nonplussed, CM Vijayan says his government is “committed to protecting the kurinji habitat”. Insisting that only the stakes of small landowners will be protected, he said any future course of action will depend on the committee’s findings. ■

WEST BENGAL

Fringe Benefits

With local elections due in early 2018, Mamata doles out retirement benefits for contract labour

By Romita Datta

On November 24, the West Bengal finance department issued a notification announcing Rs 2 lakh in post-retirement benefits to all contract workers in the unorganised sector. Former Left Front labour minister and CITU (Centre of Indian Trade Unions) state president Anadi Sahoo promptly cited his government’s Rs 1.5 lakh package and sundry benefits for superannuated workers. He claimed the Mamata Banerjee government had merely repackaged the old scheme as its own.

With panchayat polls slated for early 2018, the Trinamool Congress government is racing to ensure that a significant majority of the state’s 100 million residents benefit from its schemes. This includes some 40,000 contractual workers in various government departments and nearly 15 million in the unorganised sector.

But there’s a problem. Left-affiliated unions have a membership of 1.7 million and the Congress-controlled INTUC another 600,000

✓ TILL THE NEXT WHISTLE

Headload workers take a break at Kolkata railway station



SUBIR HALDER

among unorganised sector workers. The TMC's INTTUC, by contrast, doesn't yet have a prominent footprint, which is why Mamata is rolling out social security sops as a fallback.

Alive to the plan, Left leaders say it won't be easy to hoodwink the workers. "We are educating them on how the government is repackaging old schemes under new names with limited benefits," says Debanjan Chakrabarti, general secretary of a Left-affiliated construction workers union.

In a bid to make them uniform, the government is bringing all social welfare schemes—for construction, transport, beedi industry and other workers—under a single umbrella. But while this has benefitted some, it has also hurt the interests of others like transport workers whose benefits were

THE CLUBBING OF WORKER WELFARE SCHEMES HAS COME IN FOR SERIOUS FLAK

derived from the lucrative annual cess on licence renewals.

Left leaders say they fear funds will be misappropriated after the schemes are clubbed, as it will give the government control over a Rs 1,800 crore reserve from workers' provident fund contributions and cess-linked schemes. Insisting that cess-linked schemes that involve the Centre cannot be merged, they have petitioned the labour commissioner. "Beedi workers used to get financial assistance to build houses and

for electricity connections. Every year, workers could avail of Rs 30,000 in medical benefit under RSVY (Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana) for treatment in government hospitals. Now everything is merged under one medical insurance scheme," complains Sahoo. TMC leaders, however, say they have been able to end the disparities amid different categories of workers. The interest from the corpus (reserve) fund, they point out, will part-fund workers' pensions.

Even more contentiously, the TMC government has withdrawn the right of trade union leaders to verify or attest the eligibility of workers for retirement benefits. Under the current dispensation, only elected people's representatives can do so. Left leaders allege this has been done to weaken the trade unions and benefit the TMC cadre. ■

MADHYA PRADESH

Haunted House

Legislators feel the 'vaastu flawed' assembly building is affecting their lives

By Rahul Noronha



PANKAJ TIWARI

▲ **FLAWED?** The Charles Correa-designed MP Vidhan Sabha

So is there a *vaastu* flaw in the legislative assembly building in Bhopal? Former Congress minister K.P. Singh seems to think so, questioning the untimely demise of nine MLAs over the past four years. Intervening at the opening of the assembly session on November 27, the leader demanded that speaker Sitasaran Sharma organise a *karmkaand* as per *pauranic* rituals.

Thirty-three sitting state legislators have died in the past 19 years since the 11th Vidhan Sabha (1998-2003). Singh isn't alone. There's an entire section of MLAs who are convinced the deaths are linked to the Vidhan Sabha

building not being "vaastu compliant". In fact, the concerns had prompted erstwhile speaker Shrinivas Tiwari to organise a special prayer in the well of the house, some years after the building designed by celebrated architect Charles Correa was opened in 1996.

Now consider this: most of the deceased MLAs passed away because of old age or terminal illnesses; some deaths were in motor accidents; and there's at least one instance where alcoholism was alleged to be the cause.

Former minister and Congress legislator Govind Singh, a rationalist, is amused by the demands. How can the building have anything to do with the

deaths?, he wants to know. But with curious beliefs and superstitions ruling politics in MP, Singh is clearly in a minority. A day after K.P. Singh raised his demand, Shailendra Patel, the Congress MLA representing Ichhawar, a hamlet in Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's home district Sehore, tabled a query. He wanted to know if the CM was avoiding Ichhawar because of the superstition that chief ministers who visited the place lost their jobs.

While the state government was at pains to deny the suggestion, there is really no other explanation for why Chouhan always avoids Ichhawar, even when visiting areas close by. ■



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RAHUL ERA At 24, Akbar Road on December 4, the day he filed his nomination for the post of party president

THE NEW RAGA

AFTER RESISTING IT FOR 13 YEARS, THE HEIR APPARENT TAKES CHARGE OF THE CONGRESS. CAN HE REVIVE THE STRANDED PARTY?

BY KAUSHIK DEKA

W

ill he, won't he? After keeping the Congress as well as the country guessing for the past 13 years, Rahul Gandhi finally put that uncertainty to rest on December 4. He will now become the sixth member of the Nehru-Gandhi family to take charge of the 132-year-old Grand Old Party of India.

On paper, at least, the Nehru-Gandhi scion is well-placed to lead the party: at 47, he has interned under his mother, Sonia Gandhi, for 13 years, four years as No. 2 in the organisation. Sonia herself was a political novice when she became Congress president at 52; father Rajiv was younger at 41 when he was forced to take charge of the country and the Congress after the assassination of his mother Indira Gandhi in 1984.

However, Rahul inherits the Congress mantle at a time when the party is plumbing the depths of political fortunes. It has a miserable 44 seats in the 543-member Lok Sabha, its vote share having plummeted to a historic 19.5 per cent low

in 2014. In the past three years, the Congress has faced defeat or failed to make any impact in 15 assembly elections, and in the process lost several of its strongholds such as Maharashtra, Haryana, Assam and Kerala. Currently, it is in power in just eight of India's 29 states, retaining a mere 766 seats in the 4,120 assembly constituencies across the country. Congress-*mukt* Bharat has never seemed a more distinct possibility.

Until recently, Rahul himself had not done much to inspire confidence. Despite choosing the electoral route to the top post in the party, there is little he can do to shake off the tag of an entitled dynast, something the BJP never misses a chance to bring up against him, whether it is party president Amit Shah calling him '*shehzada*' or Prime Minister Narendra Modi describing his current ascension as the beginning of '*Aurangzeb raj*'. His sudden, prolonged absences, string of public gaffes and indecisiveness have only helped the BJP's social media machine establish him as a '*Pappu*' in public perception. He is accused of being inconsistent, and lacking any political or economic vision, leading Union

minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi to call his elevation “promotion without performance”.

Yet, bit by bit, Rahul is learning to inch back into the political reckoning. From being The Reluctant Prince, he now seems more willing to take charge, making his presence felt and heard—on foreign university campuses, social media or campaign trail. He is sharpening his discourse, as he demonstrated at UC, Berkeley. His tweets on social media have become sharper and wittier too, and his coinages smarter—the recent quip on GST as ‘Gabbar Singh Tax’ elicited as much attention as his “*suit-boot ki sarkar*” jibe in 2015.

Gone also is the aloofness, with Rahul becoming more touchy-feely in his interactions with people. He continues to espouse the cause of the marginalised, be it farmers, small traders or Dalits. “His first speech in Parliament,” says Union minister Jitin Prasada, “was about farmers in Muzaffarpur. A decade later, he is still talking about them and other marginalised sections of society.” But rather than resorting to the clichés of a bleeding heart socialist, he is sharpening his discourse, starting a conversation around jobs, price rise and economic growth. “He has realised that idealism must be tempered with pragmatism, and it must catch public attention,” says Congress Rajya Sabha member Abhishek Manu Singhvi. Adds former Union minister Pallam Raju, “Rahul is a socialist at his core. But he has realised that a socialistic approach is not the only answer for an aspirational generation and an expanding economy.”

MEETING THE MODI CHALLENGE

However, he is up against the formidable political charisma of Narendra Modi and the brutal, result-oriented election machine of Amit Shah, powered by the engine of the RSS cadre. “The Congress must become fighting fit to take on the challenge of the RSS-BJP,” says former Union finance minister P. Chidambaram. With four big states—Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka—and four northeastern ones—Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura and Nagaland—going to polls next year, results in these will be crucial for Rahul’s leadership, as they will set the tone for the general election of 2019.

For the moment, however, rather than set his eyes on the grand prize, Rahul is choosing to fight one battle at a time. Currently, he is concentrating all his energies in Gujarat, where he is backing the young trio of Hardik Patel, Alpesh Thakor and Jignesh Mevani. Of all his electoral campaigns in the past five years, this has got the most positive response.

In the longer run, Rahul is hoping to forge an alliance of Opposition parties against the BJP. “The Bihar (assembly election) experiment proved that the BJP can be defeated. Rahul has been accepted as a leader by the SP’s Akhilesh Yadav, DMK’s Stalin and RJD’s Tejashwi Yadav,” says Congress general secretary C.P. Joshi. In 2014, the Congress vote share was 19.5 per cent and the BJP’s 31.3 per cent. In 2019, Rahul will need to improve not just the Congress tally, but build alliances in a manner that the combined vote share of the opposition parties can bridge the gap between them and the saffron party.

Rahul has already made several pragmatic moves in that



THE RAGA RESUME

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE NEW CONGRESS PRESIDENT

AGE
47
YEARS

MPhil (Development Studies)
from Trinity College,
Cambridge, BA from Rollins
College, Florida, US

RISE IN ASSETS...

2004*	₹55 LAKH
2009*	₹2 CRORE
2014*	₹9 CRORE

*Year of affidavit

IMMOVABLE ASSET: Indira Gandhi farmhouse in Sultanpur village, Mehrauli, New Delhi, with sister Priyanka Robert Vadra

...BUT DECLINE IN ELECTORAL POPULARITY

% of votes in Amethi and victory margin

2004	2009	2014
66 (290,853)	72 (370,198)	47 (107,903)

Nearest rival and % votes gained by them

Chandra Parkash Mishra Matiyari (BSP)	Asheesh Shukla (BSP)	Smriti Irani (BJP)
16	15	34

OTHER SKILLS

Black belt in Japanese martial art Aikido

FAVOURITE FOOD

Momos

CURRENTLY READING

Books on
Swami Vivekananda



MOTHER, MENTOR
With Sonia Gandhi on father
Rajiv's death anniversary

VIKRAM SHARMA

TO-DO LIST FOR RAGA

The challenges before the Congress president
and how he plans to overcome them

TASK 1

Restructure organisation, build a core team

CHALLENGE: Easier said than done. He has more leaders, less cadre. Will also have to manage resistance from the old guard

TASK 2

Promote strong leaders in states who can motivate grassroots workers for 2019 challenge, and end factional fights in other big states

CHALLENGE: Pressed

for time, he has only 18 months to go for 2019

TASK 3

Prepare for elections next year in four big states—Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh

CHALLENGE: Has to contain infighting and project strong leadership

TASK 4

Come across as a dependable, consistent

leader who can be seen as a credible alternative to Narendra Modi

CHALLENGE: Though his popularity on social media is on the rise, his decision-making is still tardy

TASK 5

Be more specific about what he stands for

CHALLENGE: Though he has consistently espoused the cause of marginalised sections such as farmers, small traders and fishermen, he has failed to offer

a concrete political or economic vision

TASK 6

Create a working relationship with other Opposition parties to form an alliance against the BJP

CHALLENGE: He could not retain Nitish Kumar in the mahagathbandhan, and Mamata has her own prime ministerial ambitions. To bring together Mamata and the Left, and the SP and BSP under one umbrella will be another challenge

RAHUL'S BATTLES

He has consistently championed the cause of marginalised sections, though certain efforts have remained only symbolic

MARCH 7, 2008

Stands besides the tribals of Niyamgiri hills in Kalahandi, Odisha, and declares: "*Kalahandi ka, aur adivasiyon ka, Dilli mein ek sipahi hai, uska naam Rahul Gandhi hai* (for Kalahandi, and the tribals, there is one soldier in New Delhi—Rahul Gandhi)." Two years later, the UPA government rejects the environmental clearance to Vedanta's bauxite mining project in Niyamgiri hills



2010, 2011, 2015

Takes local train on February 5, 2010 from suburban Andheri to Dadar in Mumbai to send the point across to the Shiv Sena that Mumbai belongs to every Indian. Later in October, travels from Gorakhpur to Mumbai in second-class sleeper coach to tune in to the problems of the people who migrate to the metropolis. Takes the Delhi Metro on October 5, 2011 and then a radio taxi to reach the Japanese Park in Delhi's Rohini area



AFP

2009

Spends a night at four Dalit houses in UP villages between January and September as part of his Discovery of India tour to project himself as a leader of the "aam aadmi"

MAY 11, 2011

Joins farmers in Bhatta Parsaul village in Uttar Pradesh protesting the forcible acquisition of their land at low rates by the state government. Is arrested by UP police. Later, the UPA government passes the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill, 2011

2013

Forces UPA government to withdraw ordinance giving convicted politicians reprieve from disqualification, describing it as "complete nonsense" at the Press Club in New Delhi

FEBRUARY 4, 2014

Sits with northeastern students at Jantar Mantar observing a candlelight vigil for Arunachal Pradesh student Nido Taniam, who had earlier died in a racist attack in the capital

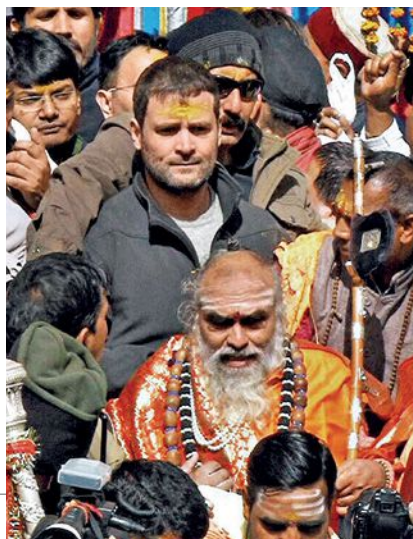
APRIL 20, 2015

In a 20-minute speech, makes the most scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "Yours is a government of big people, a suit-boot sarkar," he says, referring to his monogrammed suit

APRIL 25, 2015

Treks his way to Kedarnath temple to pay respects to the victims of the 2013 Uttarakhand flood, marking the launch of Congress's soft Hindutva, replicated during the UP and Gujarat elections

PTI



MAY 27, 2015

Enjoys a kari meen lunch at a fisherman's home in Chavakkad, Kerala; slams the Modi government's decision to extend the ban on trawling



JUNE 13, 2015

Squats with protesting sanitation workers outside the municipal office in Patparganj

JANUARY 30, 2016

Takes on the BJP government over Dalit scholar Rohith Vemula's suicide, sitting on a day-long hunger strike alongside agitating students of the University of Hyderabad

FEBRUARY 13, 2016

Meets students of Jawaharlal Nehru University protesting the arrest of their leader Kanhaiya Kumar on charges of sedition

NOVEMBER 11, 2016

Queues up at the Parliament Street branch of the State Bank of India in New Delhi to exchange Rs 4,000 in old notes to show solidarity with people inconvenienced due to demonetisation



PARVEEN NEGI/MAIL TODAY

NOVEMBER 18, 2016

Squats on a footpath near Sarojini Nagar market in Delhi, asking a group of street vendors how the demonetisation decision has affected their respective businesses

SEPTEMBER 2017

His speeches at two American universities—Princeton and UCLA—at a time when the slowdown in the Indian economy was making news, made many in India sit up and take notice. The body language was that of a challenger, not of the vanquished

SEPTEMBER 2017 ONWARDS

Though active on Twitter since 2015, takes charge of his handle and unleashes a set of tweets with a blend of sharp wit and sarcasm

direction. After Nitish left the Bihar *mahagathbandhan* in a lurch this July, he extended support to Lalu who had been absent from electoral politics because of Rahul's opposition to the UPA ordinance giving convicted politicians a reprieve from disqualification. The big test for Rahul, though, will be to bring together bitter rivals such as the TMC and Left in West Bengal and the BSP and SP in Uttar Pradesh. Though he has great rapport with Left leaders such as Sitaram Yechury and D. Raja, their dominance is currently restricted to Kerala, where they are the traditional rivals of the Congress. It's still not clear if BSP chief Mayawati and TMC chief Mamata Banerjee will accept Rahul as the leader of a rainbow coalition. At the India Today Conclave East in Kolkata, Mamata categorically announced: "I have great respect for Rajivji, Soniaji. Rahul has started and let him work. Allow him to work first. You cannot impose (on me) or bulldoze me on what would be my opinion. It depends on (the future) situation," she said. Leaders like Naveen Patnaik of the BJD and K. Chandrasekhar Rao of TRS have preferred to remain equidistant from both the Congress and the BJP. Though Rahul has an excellent personal equation with NCP head Sharad Pawar, he could not prevent the party from contesting the Gujarat elections independently. A lot will also depend on the electoral performance of these parties. Apart from the TMC, all other parties have seen massive defeats in the recent past—all non-NDA parties together have less than 175 seats, including parties such as the AAP and YSR Congress. The only electorally significant rival is the DMK, which may see a turnaround in 2019 as bitter rival AIADMK is in disarray after Jayalalitha's death.

■ THE CHALLENGE IN STATES

Rahul also has the daunting task of restructuring the party at the top and building strong leadership in the states. In the last three years, his strategy has been to utilise veterans who are electoral assets where they are most needed, and place his favourites in significant positions in the states. "The big challenge would be to put our team in place soon," says Rajeev Gowda, who heads the research wing of the party. "There is already a subtle change in the Congress now. Several youngsters have been promoted within the organisational hierarchy, and they are working closely with senior leaders." Criticised in recent years for ignoring the old guard, Sonia Gandhi's political secretary Ahmed Patel says, "He has no problem working with any Congress leader, old or young."

In Gujarat, Rahul has made former Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot secretary in charge and given him four young deputies in Lok Sabha MP Rajeev Satav, Maharashtra MLAs Harshvardhan Sapkal and Varsha Gaikwad and Madhya Pradesh MLA Jeetu Patwari. In Karnataka, 55-year-old Kerala MP K.C. Venugopal, who is often seen sitting next to Rahul in Parliament, has been appointed general secretary in charge and Rahul has indicated that Siddarmaiah will be the chief ministerial candidate. In Punjab, Rahul allowed Amarinder Singh to take control of the Congress—a lesson he learnt from the defection of Himanta Biswa Sarma to the BJP, which

THE SMART TALKER

In the course of a decade, his gift of the gaffe is finally flowered into a gift of the gab

"My mother came to my room and cried... because she understands that power is poison."

January 20, 2013, Jaipur

"It (Congress) is a funny party. It is the largest political organisation in the world but does not have a single rule or regulation. We create new rules every two minutes and then dump them. Nobody knows the rules in the party."

Jan 20, 2013

"Poverty is just a state of mind. It does not mean scarcity of food, money or material things. If one possesses self-confidence, then we can overcome poverty."

August 7, 2013, Delhi

"People call us an elephant. We are not an elephant. We are a beehive. It's funny but think about it. Which is more powerful? An elephant or a beehive?"

April 4, 2013, Delhi

"The Opposition has good marketing skills. There is chamak, naach, gaana. They are selling combs to bald men. Now they are trying to give them haircuts."

January 17, 2014, Delhi

"I am going to put all my efforts to transform the organisation of the party. I am going to make sure that a transformation happens, and I will do it in ways in which you cannot even imagine."

December 8, 2013, after Congress lost elections to the Delhi assembly

"The BJP has made GST the Gabbar Singh Tax."

October 23, 2017, Gandhinagar

cost the Congress the Assam election in 2016.

Rahul will have to display sharp political acumen to manage infighting in other states. In Madhya Pradesh, Kamal Nath wanted to be the chief ministerial candidate, but Rahul wanted Jyotiraditya Scindia for the job. Finally, Nath will be made the state Congress president and Scindia will head the campaign committee. The announcement hasn't been made yet, as the party is waiting for Digvijaya Singh to return from his Narmada *parikrama*. Meanwhile, Rahul has appointed his confidant Deepak Babaria as the general secretary in-charge of the state.

In Rajasthan, 40-year-old Sachin Pilot helms the party but Gehlot is in no mood to cede space. Whether the Congress will be riven by infighting or put up a united challenge to Vasundhara Raje in 2018 will need some deft manoeuvring.

The party is in a big mess in Chhattisgarh where it has a good chance to topple the BJP government headed by Raman Singh. Though Rahul appointed P.L. Puniya as the general secretary in-charge of the state in July, the central leadership has done little to rebuild the party following the exit of former chief minister Ajit Jogi. "The organisational improvement has not been uniform across all states. Our election machinery needs to be activated much earlier," says Singhvi.

In Jharkhand, while the party appointed Ajoy Kumar, who had joined the Congress from the JVM in 2014, as president, it made veteran Subodh Kant Sahay the campaign committee chief. Union minister R.P.N. Singh, perceived to have a good working relationship with Rahul, has been made the general secretary in-charge of Jharkhand.

But even as he has put veterans in charge, Rahul has not succumbed to pressure by Shankersinh Vaghela in Gujarat, Ajit Jogi in Chhattisgarh and Narayan Rane in Maharashtra. "He has been very clear about one thing. No matter how senior you are in the party, you cannot dictate terms and hold the party hostage," says Randeep Singh Surjewala, communication in-charge of the Congress.

THE NEW NARRATIVE

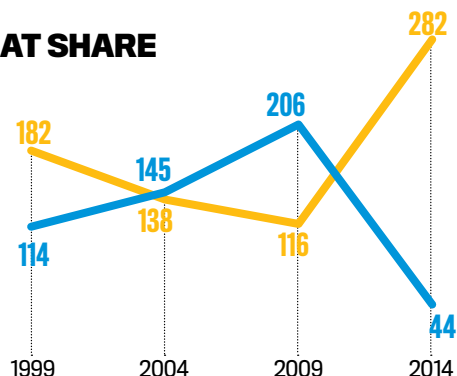
Rahul's greatest challenge is to emerge as a credible alternative to Narendra Modi. In 2015, he had the prime minister on the back foot when he challenged his *suit-boot ki sarkar*. But then the Modi government turned pro-farmer and pro-poor, launching a series of initiatives, such as Jan Dhan, Ujjwala, crop insurance for farmers, and Rahul lost that battle. This time round, Rahul has tweaked the narrative, prescribing growth with jobs as the agenda for economic revival. Accordingly, the "hard truth" about jobs is what he brought up in his speeches during the US tour in September and found an unusually positive response. "In the US, we had a neutral audience unlike what we have faced in India in the past few years. That made a psychological difference," says Milind Deora, who had organised Rahul's speeches at the universities.

According to Chidambaram, one of Rahul's key economic advisors, the Nehru-Gandhi scion is a firm believer in a liberal, open and competitive economy, and socialism for him is a goal. "The Congress has discovered that socialism is not the

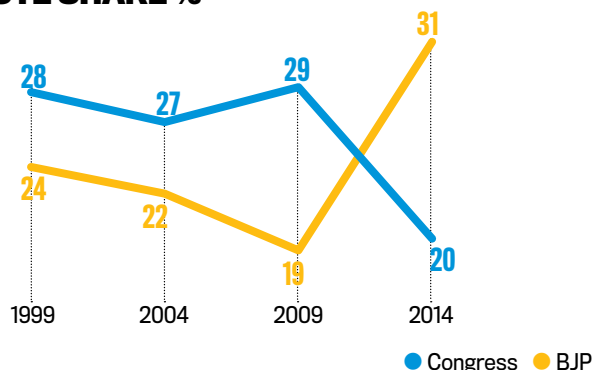
SWINGING ELECTORAL FORTUNES

Rahul's immediate challenge will be to regain the massive drop in the Congress's vote share in 2014

SEAT SHARE



VOTE SHARE %



TEST OF 2018

With four big states going to polls next year, the pressure will mount on Rahul to deliver in a bipolar contest with the BJP

● Congress ● BJP
● JD(S) ● Others

Assembly
seats

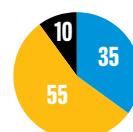
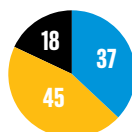
Assembly
votes %

Lok Sabha
seats

Lok Sabha
votes %

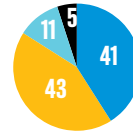
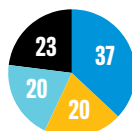
MADHYA PRADESH

Total assembly seats **230**
Total LS seats: **29**



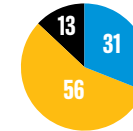
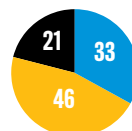
KARNATAKA

Total assembly seats **224**
Total LS seats: **28**



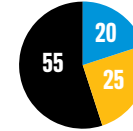
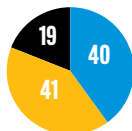
RAJASTHAN

Total assembly seats **200**
Total LS seats: **25**



CHHATTISGARH

Total assembly seats **90**
Total LS seats: **11**



means to achieve our goals. There are better means—private enterprise, entrepreneurship and competition—yet the state will play an important role,” says Chidambaram.

K. Raju, head of the SC cell of the Congress and one of Rahul's close aides, believes he will be echoing the economic vision of UK labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. “He'll support economic reforms, but allowing access of the country's limited resources to all, not just a few industrialists, will be non-negotiable,” says Raju.

Rahul offered a glimpse of his economic model in Delhi recently. “No amount of growth is enough for India if it's not

accompanied by the creation of jobs,” he said, adding that at the centre of the job creation will be the small and medium business enterprises, which alone can help India generate jobs at the rate that China does. “It is this reservoir of skill and innovation that needs to be unlocked and freed from the oppressive and unpredictable bureaucratic red tape.”

With the implementation of GST and the November 2016 demonetisation of currency taking some sheen off the Modi government, Rahul's critique of jobless growth has helped the Congress find some resonance with the public. Yet the party doesn't want to stick to Modi-bashing, it wants to come



SOCIAL MEDIA STAR

Laced with sarcastic wit, his tweets in the last 60 days have created ripples in the social media

October 9, 2017



*Modi ji, Jai Shah-'Zada' kha gaya
Aap chowkidar the ya bhagidar?
Kuchh to boliye*

Modi ji, Jai Shah had a bit too much. Were you guardian or participant? Say something

October 16, 2017



*Mausam ka haal: chunav se
pehle Gujarat mein aaj hogi
jumlon ki baarish*

Weather report: Before the polls, it will rain false promises

December 6, 2017

For all my BJP friends: unlike Narendrabhai, I am human. We do make the odd mistake and that's what makes life interesting. Thanks for pointing it out and please do keep it coming, it really helps me improve. Love you all.



October 11, 2017

*2028 mein Modi ji Gujarat ke
har vyakti ko chaand par ek
ghar denge aur 2030 me Modi ji
chand ko dharti par le aayenge.*

In 2028, Modiji will give every person in Gujarat a house on the moon and in 2010 he will bring the moon to the earth

November 25, 2017



Narendrabhai, *baat nahin bani* (it didn't work out). Terror mastermind is free. President Trump just delinked Pak military funding from LeT. Hugplomacy fail. More hugs urgently needed.

up with an alternative economic vision. "We know which are the job-creating sectors—agriculture, agriculture-related rural industries, small and medium businesses, exports and the services sector. We will pay attention to these sectors. When they grow, they'll create jobs," says Chidambaram.

The Congress and Rahul's intent is to create core constituencies beyond Dalits, farmers, tribals and minorities. There has been a systematic effort to widen the party's appeal among certain groups that the Congress thinks have been ignored or usurped by rival parties. Rahul has, for instance, set up a separate wing in the party for unorganised workers, mostly migrants in cities and rural areas. "Most of these migrants don't have any voice in any political set-up. The lateral flow into the party from these sections is not happening. Such departments will create platforms for leaders from these sections," says Delhi Congress president Ajay Maken, whom Rahul has recently gifted *The Mystery of Capital* by Hernando de Soto to help him understand the challenge of wealth creation for the urban poor. To reach out to the professional middle class, a constituency seen to be a preserve of the BJP, Rahul has created the All India Professionals Congress, under the leadership of Shashi Tharoor.

OTHER WEAPONS IN THE ARSENAL

Above all, Rahul is trying to project an inclusive agenda to counter BJP's divisive one. He turned the BJP taunt of Congress-*mukt* Bharat on its head when he said he wouldn't wish the same on the BJP. And though several Congress leaders dismiss it as a media fancy, there has been a shift in the Congress's approach to minority issues. An increasing number of partymen maintain its perceived minority appeasement has alienated the larger Hindu voters. "The opposition parties have been successful in creating the perception of appeasement by the Congress. While staying committed to the support of minorities and the cause of their welfare, it is equally important to undo the perception," says Pallam Raju.

So, it's no coincidence that Rahul was seen at Somnath temple this year, trekked to Kedarnath in 2015, visited numerous temples during the UP election and now in Gujarat and declared himself a Shiva *bhakt*. In June, he invited ridicule when he said he was studying the Gita and the Upanishads for a debate with the RSS which to his mind has usurped the religion. "Why do you give Modi undue credit?" he asked in a public meeting in Delhi in July. "He is just a by-product. It's no longer about Modi but whether this country

THE POLITICAL UNIVERSE OF RAHUL GANDHI

Though a new team will eventually be put in place, Rahul does not believe in one core team taking all the decisions



can have RSS ideology in its daily governance.”

Social media too forms an integral part of the Congress gameplan to take on the BJP, which has utilised the digital media quite effectively against the grand old party. It also serves as a handy, effective tool to project Rahul as a “common citizen” rather than a dynast. So there are selfies of him travelling in budget airlines, a video of his pet dog Piddy on Twitter and an update on mother Sonia’s illness. “With respect to 2019, we’ll have to rely more on social media and tie up with people’s movements to take our message to the masses,” says Gowda. “The change is already visible on social media, and you see how we have dovetailed it with people’s movements in Gujarat and, in a sense, amplified their message.”

Will all this be enough for Rahul to manage the Congress and perhaps one day the country? There are still concerns over his delayed decision-making. “I’m happy at his elevation,” says veteran party leader Digvijaya Singh, once considered Rahul’s political mentor. “But now he must take decisions.”

Jyotiraditya Scindia agrees: “He needs to create strong leadership in the states. And we need to hit the ground running as several states are going to polls next year and we have a general election in next 18 months.”

Having assumed the reins of the party, Rahul now cannot be inconsistent, mercurial or aloof. He will also have to lay down an alternative roadmap for development and evolve a distinct style of leadership. Asked once by Joshi about his leadership vision, Rahul quoted Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu: “A leader is best when people barely know he exists. When his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves.” But coming from the first family of Indian politics, invisibility isn’t a privilege Rahul can afford. Having resisted power for so long, calling it a poison, he will now have to be decisive, and deliver quick and tangible results on two fronts—a revamped party structure and electoral victories. Any further delay may grant him invisibility, though not in the way Lao Tzu recommended. ■



GUEST COLUMN

The Prince is Dead, Long Live the Leader

SHIV VISVANATHAN

Often when I am at loss of what to write about in politics, or more how to write it, I have an imaginary conversation with my old colleague, the late Rajni Kothari. As a political scientist, Rajni was acute. He was a remarkable listener. He could listen for hours, taking notes on the back of envelopes. Most of all, Rajni had a way of giving wonderful advice. He told me once, “Don’t listen to the expert. The expert is the master of the predictable. Go out for a walk and gossip with a fresh face. Make that the beginning of your thinking. Remember, you have an advantage. You are not a political scientist.”

Invited to write on Rahul, I followed Rajni’s advice. Rahul summons the predictable and yet remains elusive. I saw a picture of him at the HT leadership summit, and he looked as if he had strayed in. The inevitable move is to contrast him with Modi, pitching his *levitas* against Modi’s *gravitas*. Luckily, I bumped into an old friend, an artist, who gave me a new tack. I told her Rahul in a semiotic sense looked like a Pinocchio, whose nose had not grown. My friend laughed and said you are outdated. “Rahul,” she insisted, looked like something out of Archie comics. He conveys, to twist Milan Kundera’s memorable phrase, an unbearable light-headedness of being.

My friend laughed and said that he was from the comicbook world alright, but claimed that is what saves him for politics. Look at Modi, in contrast, today. He looks grim, something out of the grimmer part of a Tussauds’ museum. He smells like the inventor of a dismal science, grim like a sorcerer’s assistant while Rahul looks like a cross between Jughead and Archie. He is still lovable and has the moral luck of being untainted. Even if his cartoons put him in a nappy or thrust him into a pram, he remains the boy next door. He is still perennial as a promising young fortysomething while Modi looks jaded. Modi’s *chai pe charcha* sounds more like a committee meeting, an overrated ritual, yet there is a sense of anticipation even now about Rahul. That is the magic of our comicbook man.

Another friend made a different observation. He said, in Gujarat, Rahul was like Maggi sauce—different—and people sensed the difference, though journalists could not quite describe it. He looked more relaxed and more competent. My friend said he has changed after going to the US. One wonders where Pitroda took him. He seems to have bumped into a Zen

master who has tapped the lightness of Rahul creatively. He added, “This guy has reserves. You don’t become an excellent rifle shot or an Aikido master without some sense of your inner being.” He looks focused, attentive, one senses a good listener, someone good for a face-to-face encounter, even if he is not quite a *maidan* speaker. Also, the new change is he seems to be writing his own scripts and not following the diktats of some old Congressman like Digvijaya Singh. Another observer, an old Gujarat hand, added, “The effort to mobilise youth seems to be his idea. The cameo performance of three youth leaders, Rahul with Hardik Patel, the sulky Patidar, and Alpesh Thakor has revived the scenario of

youth in politics, rattling Modi enough to go back to his old rag-bag of insults, projecting Sonia and Rahul as non-Hindu and therefore as outsiders.” It is not just caste that Rahul is tapping, but disaffected and dynamic youth as a sociological force and when these youth claim that development is losing its sheen, like demonetisation, Modi’s vocabulary suddenly appears inflationary.

RAHUL KNOWS HE MUST FOCUS ON A CONGRESS OUT TO MAKE HISTORY, NOT THE HISTORICAL CONGRESS

There is also an economy to what Rahul is doing. There are no long, dreary speeches. He talks to the point and on GST or demonetisation, he gets a higher tutorial mark than the prime minister. The audience senses something different. It behaves in a primordial way and even the press, cauterised into being Modi’s yea sayers, can smell a difference in the wind. The reading is not scientific; one cannot attach numbers to it, but one sense a symbolic devaluation of the BJP. I admit it is a reading from tea leaves but often tea leaves work better when one looks at the future.

Right now, Rahul seems to be at an intermediate stage, not quite cartoon, not yet icon. He is a newly emerging imago and the audience waits in anticipation. There is almost a sense of poetic justice because no audience has waited more patiently and desperately for the pupa to break. But this much is clear. Gujarat was an initiation rite, a donning of manhood for Rahul, and he performed the ritual well. He is no more tentative as he has crossed a transition point. After



RITE OF PASSAGE Former PM Manmohan Singh with Rahul at his nomination

Gujarat, he has to formally lead the Congress. Rituals as sequences have their own logic. Rahul can no longer be the tentative teenager. He is now ritually a political leader. Rituals can provide a sense of transition to a man if well performed and Gujarat for Rahul was a brilliantly orchestrated rite of passage. The sociological changes are marked. The persona and role called Rahul Gandhi sounds transformed and now a reversal or regression will not be easy.

The old redundancy of critique and complaint that the media thrived on is now inadequate. In fact, one is not looking at the historical Congress now but for a Congress out to make a new history. Rahul and India sense that we are standing at the cusp of two different narratives. Narrative one is about the historic Congress, the genealogical Congress of Nehru and Indira. But now that is the endodermis, a question of memory. What Rahul is saying is let me invent and create the new Congress, worked out in terms of his vision of internal democracy, of rituals of organisational change close to his heart. Like many in the new generation of management experts, Rahul believes, small alterations in an organisation are harbingers of important changes. One senses that it won't be the Old Congress but Team Rahul with other younger politicians like him. The effort needs to be experimental, open to mistakes, non-sycophantic, non-authoritarian. The old snake skins of the Congress will not work. Rahul cannot be party boss; it is too early to play statesman, but as first among equals, his role and primacy are clear. India is waiting for a new style which is collective and therefore singular, a familial style that goes beyond the old limits of the family. As an observer put it, one does not need too much clarity in the beginning. It must be a mixed-up Congress so there is a little

bit for everyone to like and to hate. It creates the right tenor for a new involvement, in a Congress that does not sound like a collection of commemorative stamps. We can now wryly say, the prince is dead, long live the leader.

Let us be clear, it is not as if the Congress as a party got everything right. Rather, the BJP as a party suddenly started getting things wrong and like the old Congress refused to recognise it or admit it. The party made a mess of demonetisation, it is blind to the fate of agriculture even as suicides and drought haunt the countryside. Rahul Gandhi has to think in terms of the future of these constituencies. In fact, he has to treat the future rather than history as his constituency and leave table-tapping and planchette with Sardar Patel to Modi. He needs to set up a set of task forces on the informal economy, especially crafts, a committee to look at agriculture through the farmers' eyes, a group to rethink education and environment before Modi's policy emasculates them. He has to now sound like the alternative—and the university and the younger media, much at loss in the Modi era, can be his allies. In mending old fences he has to build new bridges. He does not have to appeal to old ideologues. He has to provide the comfort of a new hypothesis, give India a sense of hope through new ideas, a new literacy about democracy beyond the old majoritarianism. He cannot hurry. The country has waited for him for decades. It is now his turn to wait upon it, with care, imagination and a sense of vision. In outlining hope, he is outlining possibilities for himself and a tired but patient India. ■

Shiv Viscanathan is a member of Compost Heap, a group of academics and activists working on alternative imaginations



IN THE NAME OF RAM

INDIA TODAY presents the Ayodhya almanac, 25 years after the demolition of the Babri Masjid and as the Supreme Court begins hearing the case again



GROUND ZERO

Securitymen at the disputed site in Ayodhya on December 8, 1992, two days after the demolition of the Babri Masjid

PRASHANT PANJARI/INDIA TODAY

By Ajit Kumar Jha

YOU COULD CALL IT DIVINE COINCIDENCE.

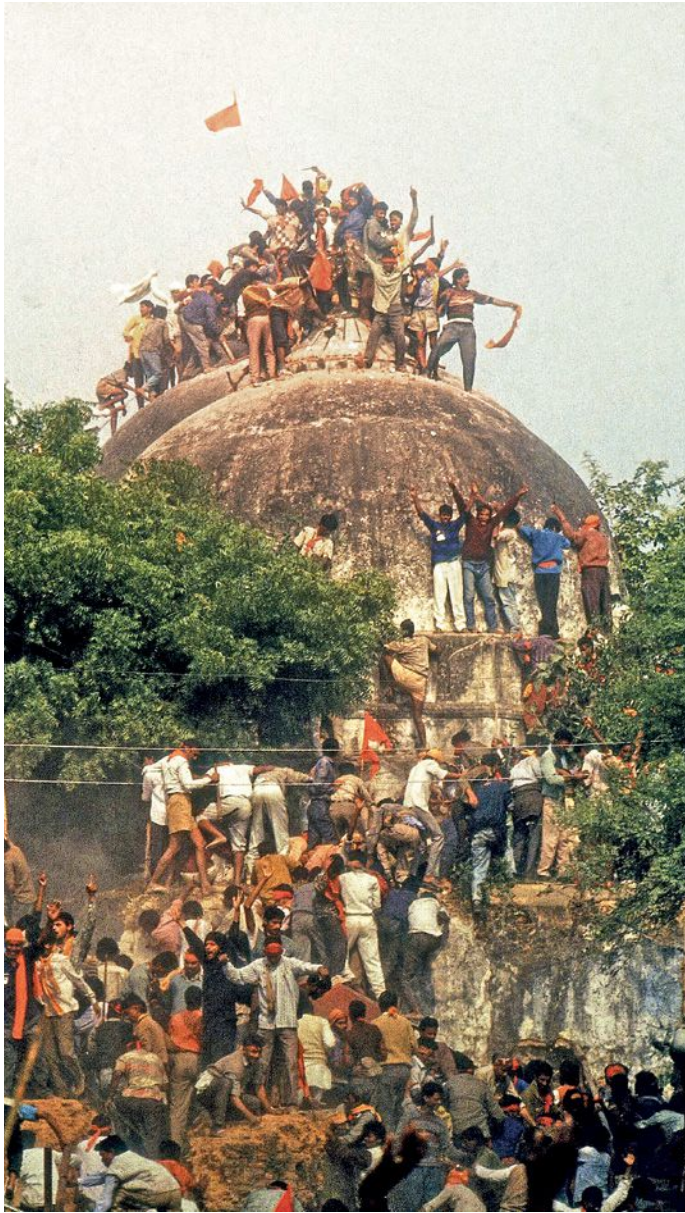
The Supreme Court's hearings on the title suits began a day before the 25th anniversary of the Babri Masjid demolition, which tore the nation asunder and left over 2,000 people dead in riots across the country. The memory and collective guilt of that national shame—and doing justice to both the perpetrators and the victims—must guide the courts.

The Ayodhya dispute has existed almost as long as independent India itself. The legal battle between Hindus and Muslims in Ayodhya began in 1949 as a title dispute. By the 1980s, the case had shot to centre stage, riding a wave of identity politics. In the early 1990s, the dispute gained popular support and took the shape of a movement, which culminated in the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992.

The political leadership shifted the matter into the courts' realm. But the cases have been hanging fire for 25 years. In 2010, the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court delivered a judgment, but the parties involved appealed against it in the Supreme Court.

While the criminal cases post-the demolition of the mosque are being heard in the CBI court in Lucknow, the civil title suits are in the Supreme Court, with the next hearing on February 8, 2018.

Grappling with 90,000 pages of oral evidence and balancing archaeological fact with the faith of millions, the courts have a mammoth task ahead of them. As the country waits with bated breath for a final closure on the subject, INDIA TODAY revisits the political, legal and moral dimensions of a dispute that has scarred the nation.

**BLACK DAY**

Kar sevaks scaling Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992

Whose Land Is It Anyway?

Origin of the Ram Janmabhoomi row

The first reference to the Babri Masjid occupying the site of the Ram Janmabhoomi was by a Faizabad court official, Hafizullah, almost two centuries ago in 1822—the “mosque founded by Emperor Babur is situated at the birth-place of Ram”. In the 1850s, the Nirmohi Akhara, a religious denomination of sadhus belonging to the Vaishnava *sampradaya*, made its first legal claim on the disputed land.

In 1885, Mahant Raghubar Das of the Nirmohi Akhara filed Suit No. 61/280 in the Faizabad court against the Secretary of State for India, seeking permission to build a Ram temple on the Ram Chabutra (raised platform), adjacent to the Babri Masjid. The court refused, fearing public disorder.

The dispute took a dramatic turn in 1949 when on the night of December 22, an idol of Ram Lalla (baby Ram) appeared mysteriously under the central dome of Babri Masjid. Puja began soon after. On January 16, 1950, a long legal battle started. The first case was filed by a Hindu Mahasabha lawyer, Gopal Singh Visharad, in the Faizabad court, seeking permission to worship the idol and an injunction against shifting it. The court disallowed the removal of the idol. The next day, one Anisur Rahman, filed a petition—the first legal volley by Muslims in the dispute after independence.

In 1959, the Nirmohi Akhara filed a suit claiming a temple existed at the Babri Masjid site in ancient times and the land belonged to the akhara. The suit was clubbed together with other suits filed in the past. On December 18, 1961, representatives of the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board responded. Today, the Nirmohi Akhara, Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas (representing Ram Lalla) and Sunni Waqf Board are the three primary parties in the dispute. ■

WHEN DID THE DISPUTE BEGIN—AND WHY

1855-58

Hindu-Muslim clashes on temple ownership noted for the first time in official records. British authorities separate prayer spaces with a railing



1885-86

The mahant of Nirmohi Akhara files a case, seeks nod to build a canopy on the Ram Chabutra. Plea rejected by Faizabad district judge: “It is too late now to remedy the grievance”

1949

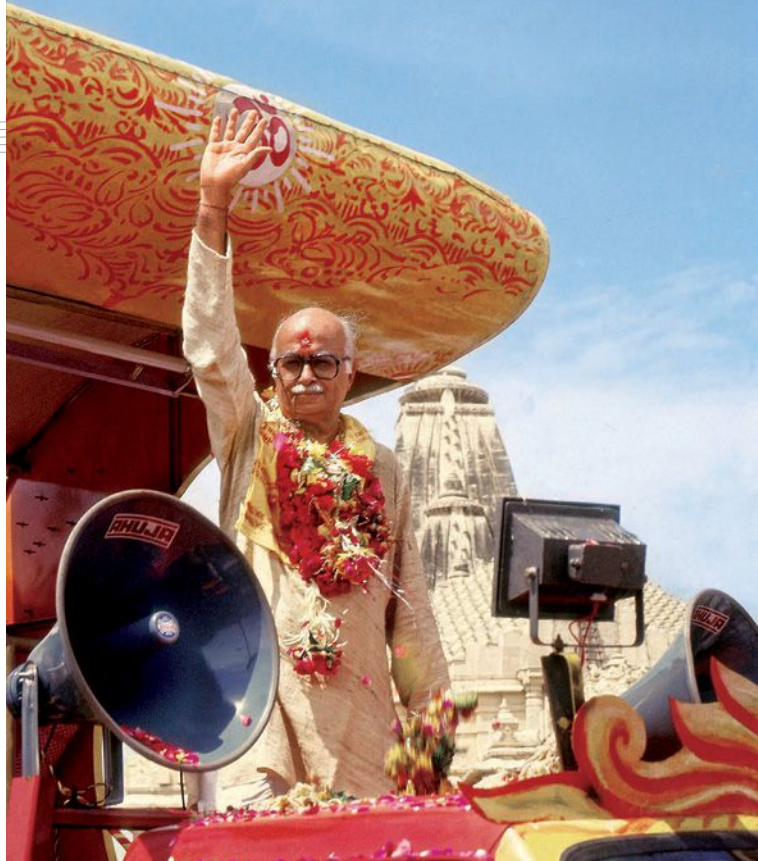
Hindu activists break into the mosque, place idols inside, claiming it's a miracle. Government locks the gates



A Crisis in the Making

How a series of events in the 1980s fuelled the Ayodhya agitation

PRASHANT PANJARI/INDIA TODAY



AGENDA AYODHYA

L.K. Advani begins his rath yatra from Somnath on Sept. 25, 1990

In the 1980s, the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute catapulted from a local issue in Faizabad to national centre stage. Politics in other parts of the country, too, was in a churn, with identity-based conflicts rearing their heads. Four major developments in the country coalesced into one, challenging the ruling Congress.

Meenakshipuram, Tamil Nadu, 1981: The first ripples of social churning were felt in February 1981 with a mass conversion in Meenakshipuram, where an estimated 400-800 Dalit families adopted Islam.

Anti-Sikh riots, 1984: The massacre of Sikhs in Delhi and other parts of the country following the assassination of prime minister Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards. The alleged complicity of some Congress politicians in the pogrom would remain a significant blot on the party under its new PM Rajiv Gandhi.

VHP 'Dharam Sansad', New Delhi, 1984: The Vishva Hindu Parishad responded to the Meenakshipuram conversion with a 'dharm sansad' in April 1984, which was attended by some 500 sadhus from across the country. Under then VHP joint general secretary Ashok Singhal's leadership, a demand was raised to build a Ram temple in Ayodhya. A

BUILD-UP TO THE DEMOLITION

1986

A district court orders gates of the mosque to be opened for Hindus to worship. Muslims protest

1989

Vishva Hindu Parishad starts laying foundation of a Ram temple on land next to Babri Masjid

1990

BJP leader L.K. Advani starts rath yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya. The BJP comes to power in Uttar Pradesh next year

1992

Babri Masjid razed by kar sevaks on Dec. 6, leading to riots across the country

Shriram-Janaki rath yatra was taken out from Sitamarhi in Bihar to Delhi on September 25, 1984. Six more yatras were taken out in UP, culminating in L.K. Advani's rath yatra in 1990, which brought the agitation to a boil.

Shah Bano case, Madhya Pradesh, 1985:

When the Supreme Court, in 1985, granted the right to alimony to Shah Bano, the 62-year-old mother of five from Indore whose husband had pronounced talaq, orthodox Muslim politicians mounted a campaign against the verdict. In 1986, the Congress, with its brute majority in Parliament, got the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill passed, effectively diluting the Supreme Court's ruling. It was seen as an overt case of minority appeasement.

On February 1, 1986, on a petition filed by advocate Umesh Chandra Pandey, demanding public access to the idol for worship, the Faizabad district magistrate ordered the opening of locks at the disputed site. The Rajiv Gandhi government, out to play the Hindu card, ensured the locks were opened within an hour of the ruling. The Congress's strategy was to undercut the BJP's temple campaign, which was by now gathering steam. But the strategy boomeranged and the Congress lost the 1989 general election. ■

TOTAL RECALL: THE DAY BABRI MASJID FELL

Many saw the demolition as a BJP bid to scuttle V.P. Singh's push for OBC quotas

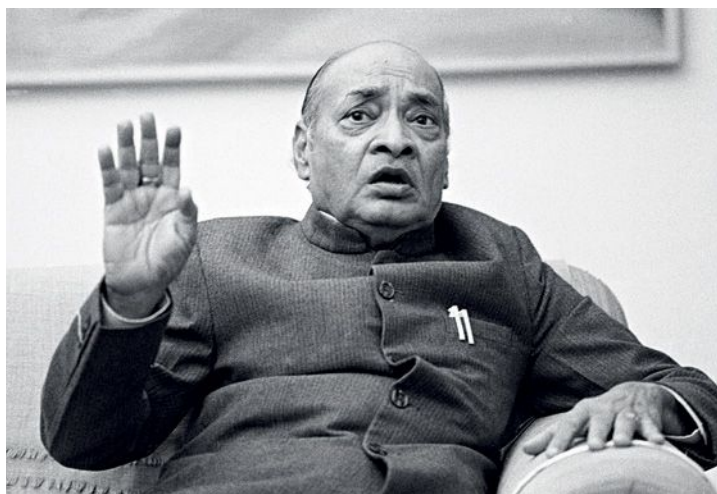
Twenty-five years after the demolition of the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992, the images have remained vivid: the three domes of the mosque overrun and hammered down to rubble by unruly kar sevaks wielding iron rods and pickaxes. Lal Krishna Advani, the poster boy of the temple movement, it is reported, was crestfallen and walked away in a huff. Some others were euphoric, egging the kar sevaks on with the slogan '*Ek dhakka aur do*'.

According to the INDIA TODAY report 'A Nation's Shame', dated December 6, 1992: "The afternoon of December 5 was the turning point. That was when it was finally announced there would be a symbolic kar seva. Ayodhya simmered with suppressed anger and frustration. Hundreds of kar sevaks stormed the Maniram Chavani, where two of the religious leaders—Mahant Ram Chandra Paramhans and Mahant Nrit Gopal Das—were subjected to a volley of angry questions. In the narrow, serpentine lanes of Ayodhya, the slogans were becoming more menacing: '*Jis Hindu ka khoon na khaula, khoon nahin woh paani hai* (If a Hindu's blood did not boil, then it's water, not blood)." In Karsevakpuram, thousands converged to express their wrath against the leadership. The Frankenstein's monster had been born. And its creators were now its immediate victims."

Many see the Ram Janmabhoomi movement as a ploy by BJP leaders, such as L.K. Advani, to scuttle then prime minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh's clarion call of reservation for the other backward classes via the Mandal Commission formula. To use the logic of the Sangh parivar, the Mandal Commission formula divided Hindus across castes while the Ram Janmabhoomi movement united all Hindus across castes.

Paul Brass, the doyen of Uttar Pradesh politics, points out how the Ram Janmabhoomi movement brought kar

BHAVAN SINGH



UNDER A CLOUD

It is often argued that former PM Narasimha Rao could have taken pre-emptive steps to prevent the demolition

sevaks from backward and Dalit castes to the Sangh parivar fold in droves.

The best evidence was the BJP's remarkable rise in the 1991 Uttar Pradesh assembly polls as a result of the OBC votes garnered by the charismatic Lodh leader Kalyan Singh. The party reaped the electoral momentum in two successive state assembly elections in 1993 and 1996.

Post the demolition, however, there was a petering out of the wave, seen in the BJP's exit from power in Uttar Pradesh for 21 years, until the return in 2017. Evidently, the failure of the organisers of the movement was not merely moral and legal but also political. ■

PICKING UP THE PIECES

1992

Over 150,000 people involved in the Babri Masjid demolition, sparking off riots in which approx. 2,000 people were killed

2002-2003

Court orders Archaeological Survey of India to excavate site. It finds evidence of temple under mosque. Muslim group disputes findings



2009

The Liberhan Commission submits its report, blaming BJP politicians for their role in the demolition of Babri Masjid

2010

Allahabad HC says: Divide the land one-third each between Waqf Board, Nirmohi Akhara and party for 'Ram Lalla'



Will the Law Catch up?

Advani, M.M. Joshi and Uma Bharti are the BJP bigwigs facing criminal conspiracy charges



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

IN WAIT

Kar sevaks at the disputed site in February 1992

A daily hearing is on in the Special CBI sessions court in Lucknow for the criminal cases relating to conspiracy (under section 120B of the Indian Penal Code) and other charges in the 1992 Babri Masjid demolition case. In the past, there were two separate criminal cases. Case no. 198/92 against Lal Krishna Advani and eight others, including BJP leaders Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti. (Two of the accused—VHP leaders Ashok Singhal and Acharya Giriraj Kishore—are dead.) The case was previously being pursued in Rae Bareilly. The other criminal case (no. 197/92) was against Pawan Pandey, the UP chief of the Shiv Sena, and 23 others. There have been no convictions yet in either of the cases.

According to All India Muslim Personal Law Board counsel M.M. Haq, who is the prosecution lawyer for the CBI, “About 226 witnesses have been produced in court by the CBI in Pandey’s case and about 57 witnesses in Advani’s case.” The two criminal cases have now been merged as per a Supreme Court directive and both are being pursued in Lucknow under one case. The deadline for the final trial is within a stipulated period of two years.

In its report in 1997, the M.S. Liberhan Commission, which was set up to investigate the demolition of the Babri Masjid, indicted top BJP leaders as being involved in the “meticulous planning” of the demolition of the mosque. The report holds 68 people culpable, including Advani, Joshi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and, more critically, then UP chief minister Kalyan Singh. The report also accuses the RSS of being the chief architect of the demolition. The Liberhan report says, “They (top BJP leaders) have violated the trust of the people.... There can be no greater betrayal or crime in a democracy and this commission has no hesitation in condemning these pseudo-moderates for their sins of omission.”

Since the Liberhan commission was merely a commission of inquiry, its recommendations are not part of the criminal cases under way in the Special CBI court in Lucknow. ■

THE CASE FILES

APRIL 2017

Supreme Court uses extraordinary constitutional powers under Article 142 to restore criminal conspiracy charges against top BJP leaders



MAY 2017

Special CBI court in Lucknow charges top BJP and VHP leaders like L.K. Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Uma Bharti, Vinay Katiyar, Vishnu Hari Dalmia and Sadhvi Rithambhara, 14 Sangh parivar leaders and hundreds of kar sevaks with criminal conspiracy, spreading communal frenzy and ill will, demolition and rioting in the Babri Masjid demolition case

THE HIGH COURT HAD TO BALANCE FACT AND FAITH

Yet, the court's verdict did not clearly assert that the Babri Masjid demolition was an illegal act

The September 30, 2010 judgment of the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court, which is the basis on which the Supreme Court is hearing the grievances of rival parties in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute, is itself a legal and moral paradox. A landmark judgment in some ways, the high court verdict is ominously silent on certain issues that are quintessential to a basic sense of justice, especially following the tragic events of December 6, 1992.

The verdict failed to acknowledge that the demolition of Babri Masjid was an illegal act. It did not identify the collective vandalism by kar sevaks, which reduced the mosque to rubble. It did not seek any reparation for the victims of the crime and the approximately 2,000 people who died across the country in post-demolition communal violence. It did not hold the Ram Janmabhoomi movement's leadership and the legal authorities accountable for failing to protect the mosque despite a guarantee given to the Supreme Court that they will uphold the law.

Yet, in terms of handling a title suit between the rival communities, the three-judge bench

TRIAL IN THE SUPREME COURT

2016

Subramanian Swamy of BJP moves SC for construction of Ram temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya

JULY 2017

UP Shia Central Waqf Board challenges 1946 order awarding Babri Masjid ownership to the Sunni Central Waqf Board

DECEMBER 2017

A SC bench adjourns hearing the 13 appeals against the 2010 Ayodhya judgment to Feb. 8, 2018

of the high court arrived at a landmark judgment. It ruled that the 2.77 acres of land at the disputed site in Ayodhya be divided into three equal parts between Ram Lalla Virajman, represented by the Hindu Mahasabha for the construction of the Ram temple, the Sunni Waqf Board and the Nirmohi Akhara.

The court had apparently based its decision on historical accounts suggesting that for centuries, Hindus and Muslims had worshipped together at the site before being segregated during British colonial rule. Relying on principles of fair distribution legacy, the court concluded that the entire property be considered jointly held by Muslims and Hindus and distributed under relevant Indian property statutes that divide contested properties on the principle of fairness. The fact that the area of the mosque's central dome, where the statue of Ram Lalla was placed, was allotted to the representatives of Hindus (Hindu Mahasabha) has been criticised. But the truth is that either way, the judgment would have appeared favouring one party or another.

While the three-judge bench was not unanimous in ruling that the disputed structure was constructed after demolishing a temple, it agreed that a temple, or a temple structure, predated the mosque at the site. Excavations by the Archaeological Survey of India were heavily used as evidence by the court. Negotiating subtly and sensitively between facts and faith, the judgment provided a semblance of balance between the two communities involved. The Allahabad High Court verdict has been challenged by all three parties and the Supreme Court has begun hearing the case from December 5. The next hearing has been fixed for February 8, 2018. ■

BRICK BY BRICK

The Ram temple workshop near Karsevakpuram, Ayodhya



MANEESH AGNIHOTRI

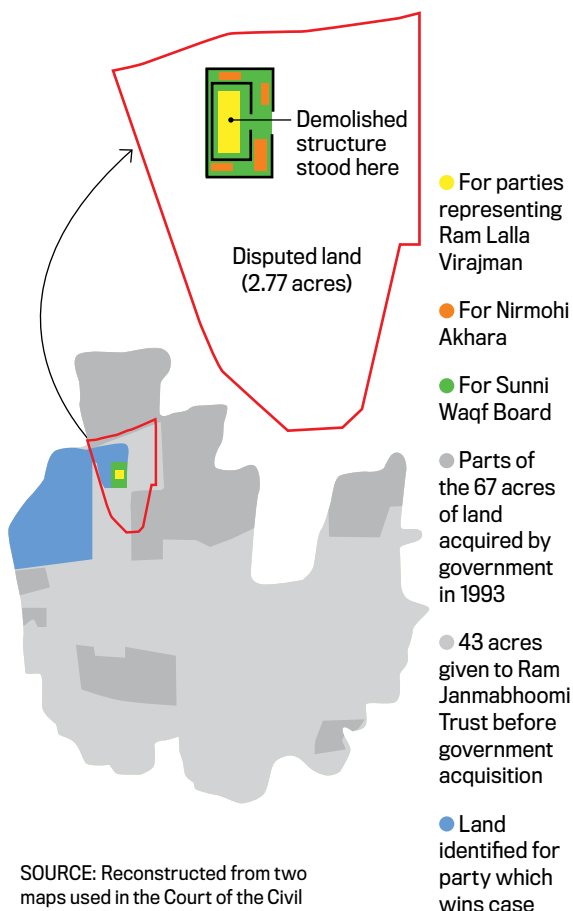


HERE'S A SMALL PIECE OF LAND WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD...

And a dispute that is at least half a century old

By Damayanti Datta

Three-fold division of disputed land by the Allahabad High Court in 2010

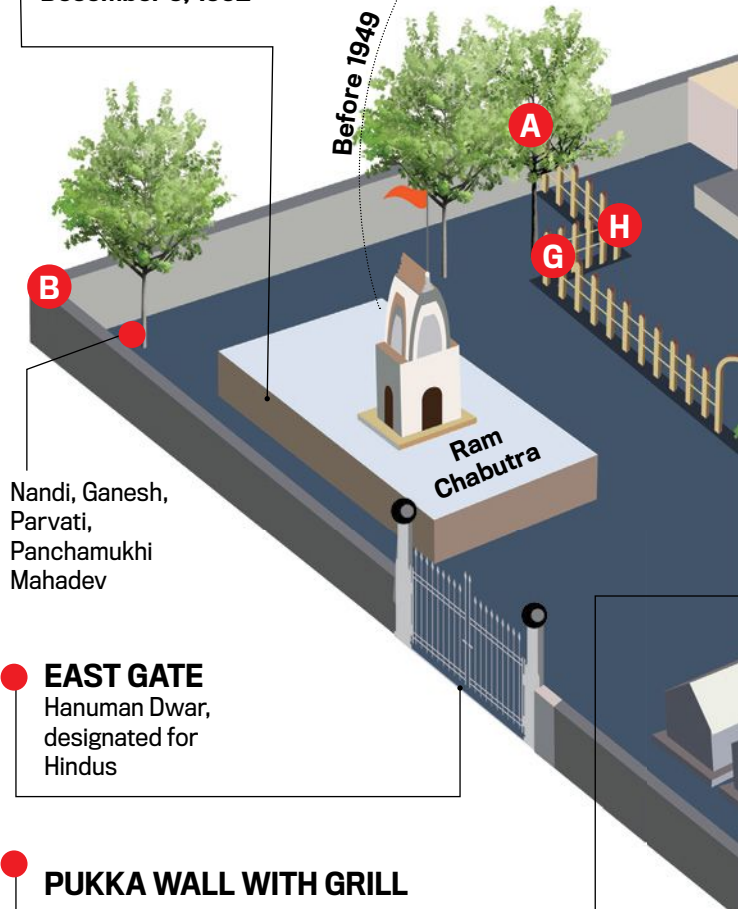


SOURCE: Reconstructed from two maps used in the Court of the Civil judge, Faizabad, Suit No. 2 of 1950

RAM CHABUTRA

Janam Asthan, a 39.6 sq. yard platform of masonry. Was built by Nirmohi Akhara around 1857. On it *charan paduka* were embossed and an idol of Ram Lalla installed in a wooden tent-like superstructure

Destroyed by kar sevaks on December 6, 1992



EAST GATE

Hanuman Dwar, designated for Hindus

PUKKA WALL WITH GRILL

Put up by the colonial administration in 1856, separating places of worship. Muslims inside, Hindus outside. Area for both is about 740 sq. yards each

Destroyed by kar sevaks on December 6, 1992

EFFORTS AT OUT-OF-COURT SETTLEMENTS

1990

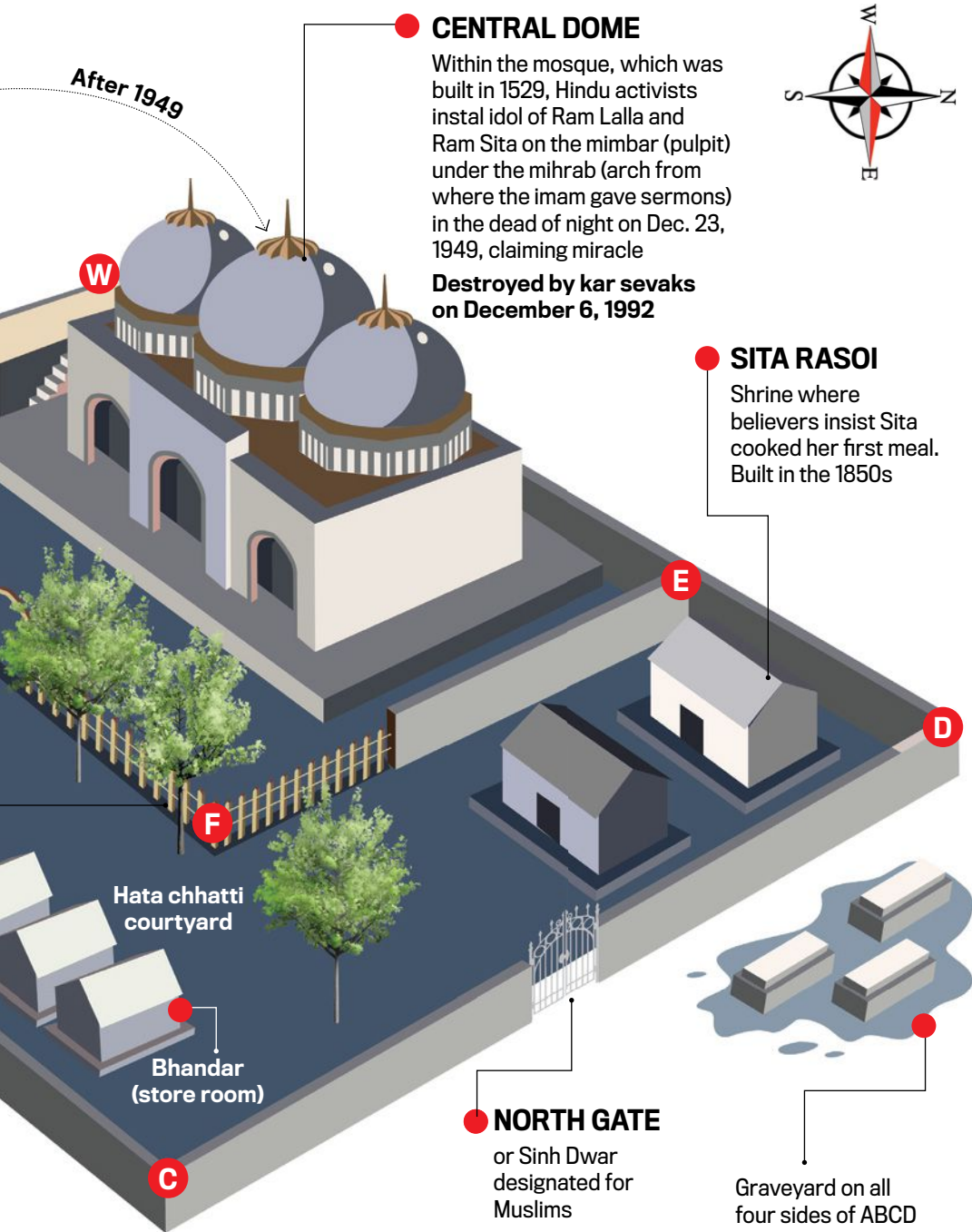
PM Chandra Shekhar, UP CM Mulayam Singh and BJP leader B.S. Shekhawat make an abortive attempt at a negotiated settlement

1992

PM Narasimha Rao makes another stab at talks with VHP and HMS via Congress leader S.K. Sahai

FEBRUARY 2015

Mohd. Hashim Ansari, oldest litigant on the Muslim side, meets Nirmohi Akhara chief for an out-of-court resolution plan to place before the SC



CENTRAL DOME

Within the mosque, which was built in 1529, Hindu activists instal idol of Ram Lalla and Ram Sita on the mimbar (pulpit) under the mihrab (arch from where the imam gave sermons) in the dead of night on Dec. 23, 1949, claiming miracle

Destroyed by kar sevaks on December 6, 1992

SITA RASOI

Shrine where believers insist Sita cooked her first meal. Built in the 1850s

NORTH GATE

or Sinh Dwar designated for Muslims

Graveyard on all four sides of ABCD

Area demarcated by the British government in 1856

ABCDE Area for Hindus
WEFGHA Area for Muslims

Graphic By RAJ VERMA and
TANMOY CHAKRABORTY



Ram Lalla, or baby Ram, gets the area under the central dome, where the Ram-Sita icons were installed "miraculously" on Dec. 23, 1949



Ram Chabutra, Sita Rasoi and the Bhandar go to the Nirmohi Akhara, set up in 1720 and one of the wealthiest with numerous Vaishnavite temples and maths. It put forward the first suit for possession of the masjid in 1885



The rest goes to the Sunni Waqf Board, an Indian statutory body established in 1964 by the Indian government under Wakf Act, 1954

APRIL 2015

HMS president Swami Chakrapani's dialogue with Mohd. Hashim Ansari collapses at the very first meeting

MAY 2016

Mahant Narendra Giri, newly elected president of All India Akhara Parishad, meets Hashim Ansari, but Ansari passes away before talks make any headway

MARCH 2017

SC bench, headed by then CJI J.S. Khehar, advocates a negotiated settlement of the dispute; even offers to mediate

NOVEMBER 2017

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar jumps into the fray, but Hindu leaders, including UP CM Yogi Adityanath, dismiss his locus in the dispute

Launch of second unit of Arihant class SSBN

Two larger submarines being built for launch by 2022

New series of 13,500-tonne 'S-5' ballistic missile submarines armed with 12 'K-6' nuclear missiles and 190-MW reactor in development

Design frozen for new class of 6,000-tonne nuclear powered attack submarines (SSNs)

Nuclear submarine base Project Varsha with underground pens by 2022

SECOND STRIKE CAPABILITY

INDIA'S INDIGENOUS NUCLEAR SUBMARINE PROJECT HUMS IN TOP GEAR WITH THE LAUNCH OF ITS SECOND BALLISTIC MISSILE SUBMARINE. BUT OTHER PROJECTS FACE HUGE TECHNICAL CHALLENGES

By Sandeep Unnithan

GRAPHICS BY NILANJAN DAS



India's top secret nuclear submarine project reached another decadal milestone last month with the launch of a second ballistic missile submarine, the Aridaman. On November 19,

Union defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman cracked the auspicious coconut on the fin of the submarine in the drydock of the Ship Building Centre (SBC) in Visakhapatnam in a low-key ceremony. Following this, the SBC's drydock was flooded and the submarine quietly floated out. It will be at least another three years before the navy commissions the Aridaman.

The event skipped the high-profile public ceremony of the Arihant's launch in 2009 even as the four-decade Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV) project to field a series of ballistic missile firing nuclear submarines is now moving at a furious assembly-line pace.

Two new units, the S4 and S4 'star', displacing over 1,000 tonnes more than the Arihant class will move into the SBC drydock vacated by the two Arihant class submarines. These submarines, fitted with eight ballistic missiles or twice the Arihant's missile load, will be launched by 2020 and 2022. An official says the Aridaman launch has more to do with creating more work space within the cramped SBC for assembling the S4 and S4*. The ATV project is India's costliest defence project. The programme to build four SSBNs (hull classification symbol for a nuclear-powered, ballistic missile-carrying submarine) is India's largest defence programme, estimated at Rs 90,000 crore. Each of these nuclear-powered sharks costs upwards of Rs 4,000 crore, not counting the infrastructure



Types of submarines



Conventional submarine (SSK)

Speed 20 knots submerged, 15 knots on surface
Endurance Has to surface to recharge batteries
Weapons Torpedoes, cruise missiles



Nuclear powered attack submarine (SSN)

Speed 25 knots submerged, 15 knots on surface
Endurance Unlimited; powered by nuclear reactor
Weapons Torpedoes, cruise missiles



Ballistic missile submarine (SSBN)

Speed 25 knots underwater, 15 knots on surface
Endurance Unlimited; powered by nuclear reactor
Weapons SLBMs, cruise missiles, torpedoes

K-6
Submarine
Launched
Ballistic Missile
DRDO project
launched in 2017

3 tonne war-head: 3-6 MIRVs,
each aimed to hit
a different target

**2nd stage
solid booster**

**1st stage solid
booster**

AERO SPIKE

**3rd stage
solid booster**

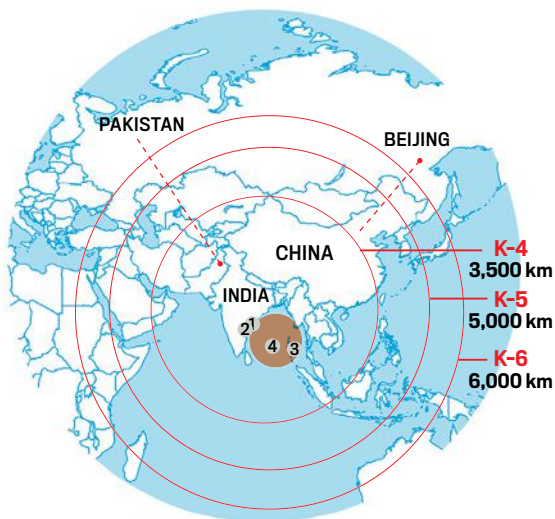
12 metres tall

2.5
metres
wide

WHY THE BAY MATTERS

The Bay of Bengal is where India will hide its SSBN fleet with long range missiles because it can target all its adversaries from here

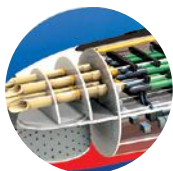
1. **Visakhapatnam** N-sub fleet assembly centre
2. **Rambilli Base** for India's nuclear submarine fleet
3. **Andaman & Nicobar islands** Test range for naval missiles
4. **Patrol area** From where an Indian SSBN can cover all its adversaries



*Artist's impression of a future Indian SSBN

THE BEHEMOTH*

Designs have been completed for a class of new 'S-5' SSBNs, the build for which will start after the launch of the 'Arihant-stretch' class



1

TORPEDO TUBES-6

To fire anti-ship/anti-submarine torpedoes and cruise missiles



2

MISSILE LAUNCHER

12 silos to launch K-6 SLBMs, long range cruise missiles



3

CRUISE MISSILES

Long-range land attack/surface attack missiles with a range of 1,500 km



4

STEAM TURBINE IN SINGLE SHAFT

Allows sub to retain hydrodynamic teardrop shape, increase underwater speed, smaller acoustic signature



5

NUCLEAR REACTOR

190-MW reactor fuelled by highly enriched Uranium gives sub underwater endurance



6

PUMPJET PROPULSOR

Or a ducted propeller which reduces noise and submarine's sonar signature

created by the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) to build their nuclear powered reactors and the Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO) submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). The project's pan-India spread—headquartered in New Delhi, hull fabrication facility in Gujarat, missile development in Hyderabad, nuclear reactor in Tamil Nadu and final assembly in Visakhapatnam—is the biggest Make in India industrial ecosystem—nearly 60 per cent of the submarine's components are indigenous. It is also the cornerstone of Indo-Russian strategic cooperation; top officials admit the project would not have been possible without extensive Russian design and technical assistance. Ahead of the submarine arm's golden jubilee on December 8, the ATV programme has nearly doubled in size with a Rs 60,000 crore project to build six indigenous nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs). "It has kicked off," navy chief Admiral Sunil Lanba told the media about the SSN project on December 1. "It is a classified project... the process has

OVER

\$2

BILLION IS WHAT THE LEASE OF ANOTHER AKULA CLASS SUBMARINE WILL COST INDIA

started." Design work for the indigenous SSNs displacing around 6,000 tonnes is under way at a newly constructed submarine design centre in Gurgaon. SSNs are armed with conventional cruise missiles and torpedoes but powered by nuclear reactors which give it excellent underwater speed and endurance.

The navy has opened up talks for the lease of another Akula-class submarine from Russia for over \$2 billion, to replace the existing INS Chakra when it is returned in 2022 after the end of its lease. (The Chakra is currently non-operational after an incident last August). Meanwhile, final

design work is under way on a new series of 13,500-tonne ballistic missile submarines. Called the 'S-5', it will be twice the weight of the Arihant class SSBNs and armed with 12 nuclear-tipped missiles. Earlier this year, the DRDO flagged off its K-6 SLBM project, a missile with an ICBM-like range of 6,000 km. The first phase of Project Varsha, a nuclear submarine base, will be completed by 2022. The base will house India's SSBN fleet in concrete pens blasted out of the hills at Rambilli 50 km south of Visakhapatnam, reportedly at a cost of Rs 30,000 crore.

THE THIRD LEG OF THE TRIAD

A nuclear engine allows a submarine to travel almost indefinitely underwater. They don't have to surface to recharge their batteries like conventional diesel-electric

India's costliest defence project

The Rs 90,000 crore project to build 4 SSBNs is now moving at brisk pace at the Ship Building Centre, Vizag

1

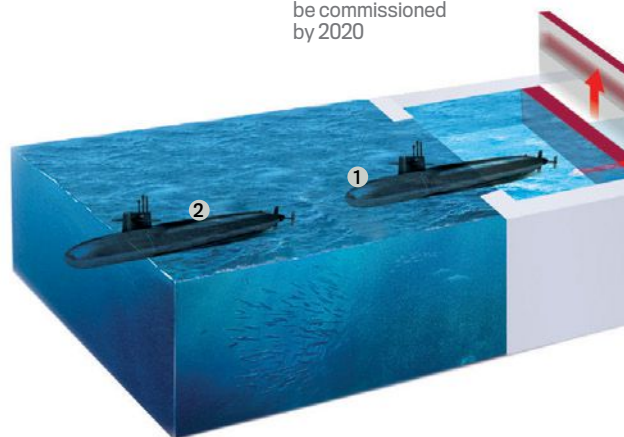
INS ARIHANT

Commissioned in September 2017

2

ARIDAMAN

Launched on Nov. 19; likely to be commissioned by 2020



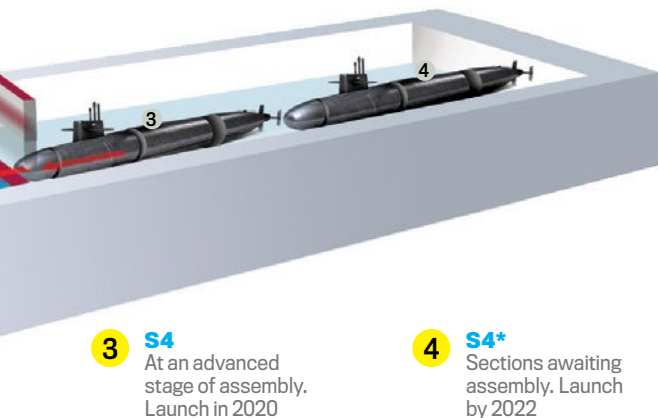
submarines (SSKs) and they move faster underwater because they avoid surface wave resistance.

The Aridaman, like the Arihant, is a ballistic missile submarine or a boomer because it carries nuclear-tipped missiles and forms the third leg of a triad of air, land and sea-based nuclear weapon carrying platforms, enunciated in India's draft nuclear doctrine after the May 1998 Pokharan-2 nuclear tests. When India observes the 20th anniversary of the tests five months from now, it will have a modest sea-based deterrent with one SSBN in service and a second soon to join it.

"The triad becomes effective when you have a submarine operational at all times. In our case, a triad is operational only part of the time—when the Arihant sails out to sea," says strategic analyst Bharat Karnad. When an Indian SSBN sails out of Visakhapatnam and into the Bay of Bengal, it can virtually disappear for months, remaining underwater, its endurance limited only by the endurance of its crew, communicating only through extremely low frequency (ELF) antennae which it trails in the water. While bombers, mobile missile launchers, missile trains and ground-based launchers can be tracked, nuclear submarines are virtually undetectable. This is what makes them the most precious asset of the nuclear triad.



The INS Arihant at its launch at the SBC, Vizag, on July 26, 2009



3 S4
At an advanced stage of assembly. Launch in 2020

4 S4*
Sections awaiting assembly. Launch by 2022

Submarines thus become an important component of India's 'no first use' policy for nuclear weapons because they act as guarantors of 'assured retaliation', preventing any surprise first-strike by a nuclear-armed adversary. They are vital at a time when China's PLA Rocket Forces can target any point on the Indian mainland with nuclear tipped missiles and India has fewer retaliatory options.

The Arihant has so far been equipped with 12 B-05 SLBMs which have a range of 750 km—which means a distant transit to an adversary's shores. A 3,500-km range missile, the 'K-4' is still in trials—the DRDO is to conduct a fourth test of the missile sometime in December, from a specially designed submersible pontoon launcher in the Bay of Bengal. Final tests of the K-4 from the Arihant are due in the Bay of Bengal in the near future. These are to be followed by tests of a K-5 missile, a 5,000-km SLBM, a project started in 2015. The 'K series' missiles are all named after former president A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. The K-4 and K-5, each of which can carry a two-tonne warhead will give the triad a longer, more robust leg. Information about the ATV project is meagre. It operates directly under the supervision of national security

advisor Ajit Doval and is now wrapped in deep levels of secrecy. A navy proposal for a high-profile launch of the Arihant where the PM and cabinet ministers would be present was overruled by the PMO. Security around the project is the heaviest for any publicly known military facility (the navy recently cited security concerns to acquire a public road passing near the SBC in Visakhapatnam).

The launch of the Arihant comes amidst fast-changing geopolitical developments. The Chinese navy has deployed and initiated the fastest submarine expansion of any navy since the end of the Cold War with an operational undersea force of 63 vessels—5 SSNs, 4 SSBNs and 54 SSKs. It recently sold a class of eight conventionally powered diesel-electric submarines to Pakistan, at least some of which are likely to be fitted with nuclear-tipped missiles.

"Sea-based deterrents are going to become more important as time passes, especially for a country with a no-first use policy," says strategic analyst Rear Admiral Raja Menon (retired). "The location of your nuclear weapons becomes known and even a half per cent knowledge of your existing weapon sites each year could add up to something substantial over the years, thus degrading your deterrent."

THE HUNTER-KILLERS

A solitary two-month patrol by a Chinese submarine in late 2013 came as a rude wake-up call for India's security establishment. China's most advanced SSN, a Shang class, sailed out from its bastion in Hainan island on December 13, 2013 and returned after a two-month 'anti-piracy' patrol in the Indian Ocean, on February 12, 2014. R&AW assessments termed the deployment 'seriously aggravated India's security concerns'. The ATV headquarters soon dusted out plans for building a series of six indigenous SSNs, shelved by the government over a decade ago due to budgetary constraints. Plans called for a series of submarines capable of speeds of over 25 knots and diving to 500 metres.

SSNs are like multi-role fighter jets, ferocious underwater predators. The navy's INS Chakra, for instance, can run underwater at speeds of close to 30 knots, more than twice the speed of conventional diesel-electric submarines, stalk and hunt warships and attack shore targets. But like fighter jets, their performance lies in their propulsion plant, in this case a high output nuclear reactor which can cope with the tremendous bursts of sustained speed without degrading reactor output. And this is where the Indian Navy and BARC are said to be staring at a technological abyss. An 83 MW SSBN reactor like that of the Arihant, is essentially meant for slow, steady operation, using it onboard an SSN would call for more frequent refuelling cycles. One solution believed to be under contemplation is for BARC to design a twin-reactor configuration for the SSN to meet its increased power demands. Another solution currently being explored



SEA CHANGE BARC's prototype 83 MW light water reactor at Kalpakkam, the S-1, used to train nuclear submariners

would be to get foreign design assistance and leapfrog from India's second generation reactor technology to fourth gen.

DREAMS OF A BEHEMOTH

The ATV headquarters building in New Delhi's cantonment area has a rather unusual name: 'Akanksha' or desire. Since its start in the 1970s, the nuclear submarine project has been a dream—never constrained by finance, only by technology.

There's a reason for the modest size of the Arihant class submarines and why they are called 'baby boomers'. When the Pokharan-2 nuclear tests announced India's entry as a nuclear weapons power, the Arihant class were meant to be SSNs. Post the tests, they were converted into SSBNs—DRDO inserted a plug with four short-ranged ballistic missiles. The design got another tweak a decade ago after an intervention from then finance minister P. Chidambaram who was on the political committee which monitors the classified programme. The minister questioned the billions being spent on a boat launching just four nuclear tipped missiles. The ATV project team came back with an 'Arihant-stretch'—an additional 10-metre-long plug for four K-4 SLBMs to be integrated into the S-4, then on the design board. The plug would increase the weight of the submarine by nearly 1,000 tonnes without significantly altering its performance. An additional unit, the S-4* was sanctioned in 2012 when it became clear that the S-5 would take a longer development cycle and would result in the ATV line being idle.

In 2006, a high-level committee under

Dr R. Chidambaram, principal scientific advisor to the government of India, assessed India's ability to design and construct a class of three new SSBNs the 'S5', to be fielded beginning in 2021. It budgeted Rs 10,000 crore, to be divided among BARC, DRDO and the ATV project headquarters, to begin the project by 2015. The project continued in the development stage and an indication of a possible long lead construction time began when the government sanctioned a fourth unit around five years ago (squeezed between the two projects as the 4*) to keep the nuclear submarine line employed. (S-1 being the shore-based pressurised water reactor at the DAE facility in Kalpakkam, iterations of which are on the Arihant class.)

The S-5 is the true-blue SSBN on par with those fielded by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. Plans drawn up over a decade ago called for an SSBN of 13,500 tonnes, a behemoth displacing nearly the weight of India's first aircraft carrier the INS Vikrant and armed with 12 SLBMs with ranges of 6,000 km and

with multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle (MIRV) capability (*see graphic*).

In February this year, the DRDO's Hyderabad-based Advanced Naval Systems began a fourth separate SLBM project—the K-6 missile. This three-stage solid-fuel missile with a 6,000 km range is said to be completely different from the K-4 and K-5. It will carry MIRVs and will be ready for induction in less than a decade. These new missiles, over 12 metres tall and over 2 metres in diameter, will carry a three-tonne warhead. The K-6 will ensure that the future Indian SSBN's bastion area will be within the Bay of Bengal, from where it can target all its potential adversaries. A former head of India's Strategic Forces Command hinted at this in a 2014 think tank event in Washington when he said that India's sea-based deterrent would eventually "be secured in havens, waters we are pretty sure of, by virtue of the range of the missiles. We will be operating in a pool in our own maritime backyard." From the safety of its depths, Indian SSBNs would be able to target all its potential adversaries with its

6,000-km range ballistic missiles (SLBMs).

The S-5 is on the drawing board but the project team has already started ordering its ancillary equipment. A new dockyard is being created at the SBC and sources say the project will have an indigenous component of over 80 per cent when they are built a decade from now. Yet, as is the case with the indigenous SSN, the main challenge in building the S-5 lies in its propulsion plant—a 190-MW nuclear plant. Without a breakthrough in propulsion technology, India's sea-based deterrent will continue to be a modest one. ■

190
MW NUCLEAR
PROPULSION
PLANT IS THE
MAIN CHALLENGE
WITH THE S-5



▶ TAP TO WATCH VIDEO

^ IT'S ALL ON HIM

PM Modi greets supporters at an election campaign meeting in Ahmedabad

SPECIAL REPORT | GUJARAT

MODI'S LATE CHARGE

The prime minister is pulling out all the stops to save the BJP in what has become a tight situation in Gujarat. But will it be enough, could there be an upset?

By Uday Mahurkar

A

s news about the BJP's triumph in Uttar Pradesh's civic elections started trickling in on December 1, some of the dim faces at the BJP media centre on Ahmedabad's busy S-G highway started brightening. The average BJP

worker in Gujarat has not had too much to cheer about of late, fighting anti-incumbency and charges of arrogance levelled by the opposition Congress and the troika of Hardik Patel, Alpesh Thakor and Jignesh Mevani.

A day later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi too looked more upbeat. Of course, south Gujarat is home base, one of the party's strongest regions while it is precariously placed in Saurashtra, north and central Gujarat except in some urban pockets. Cries of 'Modi, Modi' rend the air as he recites familiar themes—the Congress playing divisive politics, development figures under BJP rule, the bullet train brouhaha, local issues of the Bharuch district. There is even an attempt to placate the Muslims: "Two districts that have seen the maximum development are Kutch and Bharuch which have the highest Muslim populations in Gujarat," he says. Clearly, Modi looks in full control of his election

KEY CONTESTS

ALL EYES WILL BE ON THESE SEATS ON COUNTING DAY. CONGRESS AND BJP HEAVYWEIGHTS AND TWO YOUNG UPSTARTS, WHO ARE LOOKING TO UPSET THE RULING PARTY'S PLANS

spiel as the last round of the Gujarat poll campaign heats up.

Significantly, he never even indirectly attacks Hardik, the leader of the pro-Patel reservation party PAAS who continues to make the BJP ranks nervous with the adulation he is getting everywhere—from Saurashtra to north and central Gujarat—among the Patels. That hatchet job is left to state leaders like deputy chief minister Nitin Patel who warns “against falling into the Congress trap... they are using Hardik; reservation over 49 per cent is impossible under the Constitution”.

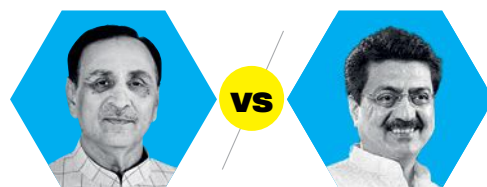
The BJP is facing rough weather on multiple fronts—mis-handling of the Patel reservation agitation, the state’s failure in assuring adequate support prices for the bumper groundnut and cotton crop, even in the implementation of the crop insurance scheme. In the case of Patels, it’s a double whammy as they also form a major chunk of the farming community. Then, of course, there’s the crossover effect of the GST rollout (which has subsided a bit after the lowering of rates) and the anti-incumbency that has built over the past 22 years.

But the biggest worry is the discontent among a section of the voters over the BJP’s *tanashahi* (arrogance in power). It’s being blamed for almost everything, from the underhand moves against Hardik, the desperate ways in which the party tried to defeat Congress leader Ahmed Patel in the recent Rajya Sabha polls and even the implementation of GST without enough consultation.

Many political analysts still believe, though, that PM Modi has it in him to overcome the public anger and fashion a BJP win. Political analyst Vidyut Thakar even says: “The support one sees for the Congress is only superficial, and even if it is real, the party has no network to convert support into votes. I see a comfortable victory for the BJP.” However, Thakar hasn’t covered ground in regions like Saurashtra, where anger against the BJP is simmering in many parts. The Patels have turned against the BJP in large numbers here while the OBCs, whom the BJP has been trying to woo, have not been as receptive as the party would have liked.

But Modi has admirers among the lower classes, a phenomenon seen across the nation after demonetisation. Sanaji Thakor, an OBC Kshatriya from the same caste as Congress’s Alpesh, is a driver in a private firm from a village near Bahucharaji in Mehsana district, heartland of the Thakor community. “Modi will win this election,” he says. “There is no one to match him. He is the only one concerned about the poor.”

The poll figures pose an interesting scenario. The BJP won 115 seats in 2012, securing 47.9 per cent or around 13.1 million votes, as against 38.9 per cent or around 10.6 million votes for the Congress—a difference of 8.9 per cent. However, of the 115 seats the BJP won, it won 15 by less than 5,000 votes and lost 23 by the same margin. Both parties are concentrating on these 38 seats, which could be game-changers.



VIJAY RUPANI, CM

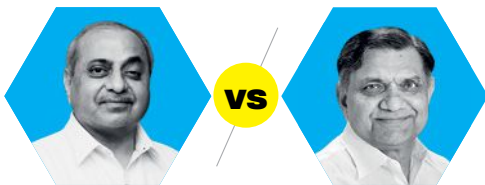
INDRANIL RAJYAGURU

RAJKOT WEST, Saurashtra

In just his second assembly elections, Chief Minister Rupani has been challenged by Congress candidate and businessman Indranil Rajyaguru, the richest candidate in the Gujarat polls, who had earlier won from Rajkot East. The Congress is banking on the support of the Patidars, who dominate the constituency. Incidentally, PM Modi won his first elections in 2002 from here

Independent candidates and those from smaller parties also played a big role in 2012, securing a whopping 8.11 per cent or around 2.2 million votes. Also, in 2012 the saffron party’s lead was slender in the rural and semi-rural seats despite Modi’s high-pressure campaign as issues of caste overtook issues of development in these pockets. In the votes cast in 125 such seats, the Congress secured just 3.7 per cent less votes than the BJP. The one factor working for the BJP here will be the success of the Seva-Setu scheme of the Vijay Rupani government, where governance was taken to the lowest unit of 10 villages. It gave benefits of several public schemes to beneficiaries virtually at their doorstep. About one crore people were covered under the scheme in just over a year.

Still, Congress leader Himanshu Vyas asks, “How can it

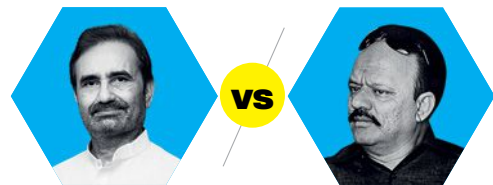


NITIN PATEL

JIVABHAI PATEL

MEHSANA, North Gujarat

If the sea of humanity that turned up when Jivabhai Patel, a former Congress MP from Mehsana, went to file his nominations is any indication, it will be a tough challenge for the deputy CM. It will be interesting to see how Nitin Patel counters the anti-BJP feeling among Patidars in this Patel citadel

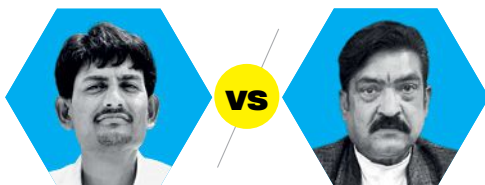


SHAKTISINH GOHIL

VIRENDRASINH JADEJA

MANDVI, Kutch

Congress heavyweight and Rajput leader Shaktisinh Gohil, for many the party's chief ministerial choice, locks horns with BJP's new face Virendrasinh Jadeja (also a Rajput) in this Muslim-dominated constituency. The BJP dropped sitting MLA Tarachand Chheda. Mandvi has been a traditional BJP seat.

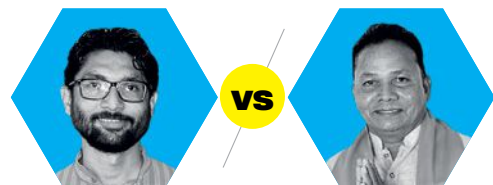


ALPESH THAKOR

LAVINGJI THAKOR

RADHANPUR, North Gujarat

Alpesh, an OBC leader, joined the Congress recently. He shot into prominence by targeting the BJP government for its poor implementation of prohibition. Originally a Congress leader, Lavingji has been part of Shankarsinh Vaghela's camp for long. Both candidates belong to the same community, so it will be an interesting contest in this OBC-dominated seat



JIGNESH MEVANI

VIJAY CHAKRAVARTHI

VADGAM, North Gujarat

Dalit activist Jignesh Mevani has filed nomination as an independent candidate and will be in a direct contest with the BJP's Vijay Chakravarthi (the Congress and AAP are not fielding candidates). Although his home turf is Ahmedabad, Mevani chose this constituency because it has a large Muslim and Dalit population. Vadgam has been a Congress stronghold; it won three of the last four elections here

win? No one will deny that 2017 is a herculean task for the BJP, compared with 2012. All the traditional vote banks have turned against it this time." This might reflect a certain overconfidence in the Congress when it knows that on the other side stand Modi and that master tactician, Amit Shah. To bridge the loss of Patel votes, Shah is wooing small OBC groups like Prajapatis, Luhars and Gajjars, who together form a good chunk of the 52 per cent OBC votes in the state. Booth workers have been asked to focus on these groups.

Booth management strategy is Shah's main strength, an area where the Congress is poor. Shah has asked the state BJP to ensure that at least three members from each party worker's family cast their vote before 12 noon. The BJP is also counting on the 750,000 'voting page in-charges' it has.

Gujarat has over 45,000 polling booths and every booth has an average voters' list spread over 16 pages. For each page of voters, BJP has a page in-charge who concentrates on the voters listed on that page. This level of micro-management is a technique Shah has mastered over time and it gives the BJP a big advantage in converting even its shrinking base into votes. State Congress spokesperson Manish Doshi is dismissive of all this. "Anger against a government can defeat any strategy," he feels. However, BJP general secretary in-charge of Gujarat, Bhupendra Yadav, says, "Booth management is what matters on the final day. This strength is also due to our force of ideologically committed party workers." Clearly, the BJP is pinning its hopes on this, besides star performer PM Modi and his emotional appeals, to get it across the line. ■

OBITUARY
SHASHI KAPOOR 1938-2017



ALAMY

THE LAST ROMANTIC

AN ENTIRE GENERATION OF WOMEN SAW IN HIM THEIR DREAM GUY. HE WAS THE DISCERNING DIRECTOR'S CHOICE. YET, SHASHI KAPOOR HAD TO WAIT LONG TO GET HIS DUE IN INDIAN CINEMA

By Madhu Jain

Shashi Kapoor's crooked canines saved him. Without them he would have been too perfect—and boring, like the impossibly handsome heroes of the silver screen. Despite this tiny imperfection, he was never quite given his due as an actor in Indian cinema until much later in his career: the Padma Bhushan in 2011 and the Dadasaheb Phalke Award in 2015 when he was so ill and could only smile feebly. (Strangely, when his elder brother Raj Kapoor was being presented the Phalke award in Rashtrapati Bhavan, he collapsed and was rushed to a hospital, where he breathed his last some weeks later.)

Women lusted after Dharmendra and Vinod Khanna, penned fan letters with their own blood for Rajesh Khanna and admired the histrionics of Amitabh Bachchan. But Shashi Kapoor was the one they fell in love with—mothers and daughters alike, and yes, secretly, grandmothers too. It wasn't just his u-turn eyelashes or dimpled cheeks. Among the least actorly of film stars, the audience believed in him as a romantic lover. The takeaway from his breakout hit *Jab Jab Phool Khile* in 1965 was that the actor's romantic feeling for his leading lady Nanda rang true on the screen.

Obsessive fans come with the job. However, in Shashi Kapoor's case, women from different corners of the country landed up at the door of his penthouse flat at Atlas Apartments, off Nepean Sea Road—all convinced he would marry them. While I was researching my biography of the Kapoors, he told me about a runaway young woman from Punjab who refused to leave. She sat on her trunk on the building's premises for weeks until the police forcibly removed her. There wasn't a trace of braggadocio in his voice recounting this incident; he actually felt sorry for her.

Being the Nice Guy of the Indian screen made him a magnet for lovelorn women even well into his sixties. But he was equally convincing, if not more, playing the bad guy. Shashi told me that on one occasion he had to play down his role as the villain. "In *Paap Aur Punya*, I came on too strong as

the bad one. Consequently, the hero appeared weak."

He was right. Discerning Shashi's potential for complex or obsessive characters, Shyam Benegal explored the non-angelic side of the actor in both *Junoon* and *Kalyug*. Perceptive international cineastes recognised his ability to explore the complexities of human nature, beyond his handsomeness. Discussing *Bombay Talkies* (1970), James Ivory, who directed him in several films, said: "Shashi draws on his own dark side. We all have our own dark sides, and he is able to bring up his."

Perceptive international directors explored this facet of his personality: as a shifty nobleman who is actually a thug in *The Deceivers*, starring Pierce Brosnan; as a not-quite-straight Pakistani businessman in Stephen Frears's *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid*; and as a mafia boss from the subcontinent in *Dirty British Boys*. Nor was he always so good-natured. "I was an angry child," he said. "I was the youngest, and could almost get away with murder. When I was about eight or ten, I challenged a friend. I had an air gun and shot him in the leg—I put a lead bullet in his leg. Everybody thought Shammiji was the angry young man, but I was."

Like his brothers Raj and Shammji, Shashi Kapoor shared an obsessive love for food and alcohol. However, his wife Jennifer Kendal, whom he met at 18 and married two years later, was responsible for his 'un-Kapooring'. She steered him towards the theatre and encouraged him to produce and act in a different kind of cinema—as well to enact the real life role of the 'perfect gentleman'. The youngest son of Prithviraj Kapoor was known for his generosity. Several actors told me he surreptitiously slipped money into their pockets when

they were out of work. What's in a name, one might ask. But had his mother not changed his name from Balbirraj (chosen by his step grandmother because of the pundits) to Shashi, would he have achieved similar success? She selected the name because he was always looking at the moon.

And leaving legions of us moonstruck. ■

**Being the Nice
Guy of the
Indian screen
made him a
magnet for love-
lorn women**

Madhu Jain is editor of The Indian Quarterly and author of The Kapoors: The First Family of Indian Cinema (2005)

COMIC-CON: DAN
PARENT INTERVIEW
PG 56

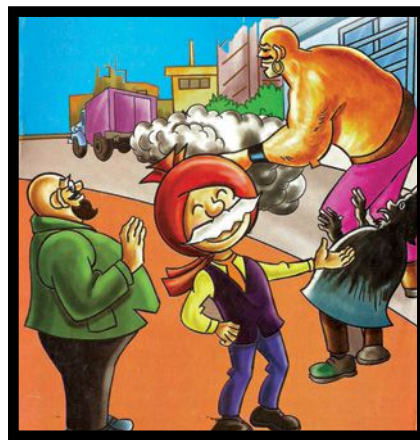
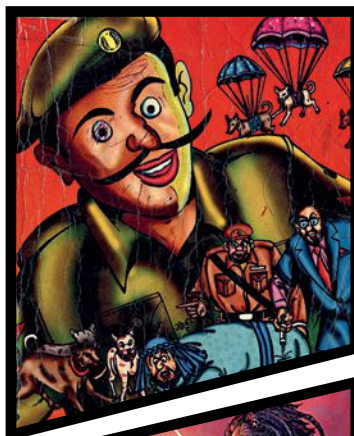
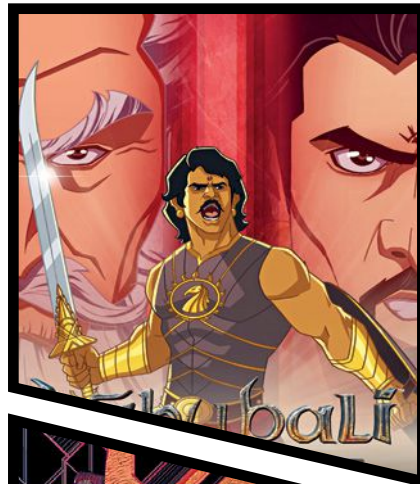
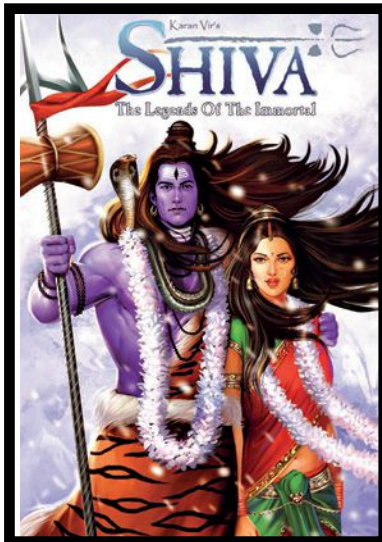
LEISURE

MADAME GANDHI:
OWN YOUR VOICE
PG 60

Q&A WITH
ALI SETHI
PG 62

NOVEL
GRAPHICS

Is this the new golden age
of Indian comics?



Clockwise from top left: AMAR CHITRA KATHA; KARAN VIR/ VIMANIK COMICS; GRAPHIC INDIA/ ARKA MEDIA WORKS; IMAGE COMICS; PRAN/ DIAMOND COMICS; HOLLYCOW; JASJYOT SINGH HANS/ KOKAACHI; KING'S COMIC; (CENTRE) MANOJ COMICS

Reader's
digest

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On November 30, DC Comics dropped the trailer for *Batman Ninja*, much to the delight of comic geeks. Directed by Junpei Mizusaki, it's the first full-length anime feature for the Dark Knight. There's no mistaking the classic characters, yet they've been reinvented in Japan's signature style.

Try imagining a desi Batman, however, and it strikes you: Despite a long history of visual storytelling, India has yet to develop a distinctive, contemporary aesthetic in comics.

The first golden age of Indian comics was in the 1970s and 1980s, when homegrown heroes like Bahadur, Nagraj and Chacha Chaudhary held their own against the likes of Mandrake, Phantom and Tarzan. What we're seeing could be the second burst of creativity, but though there's interest in the genre and a dazzling array of talent, the comics scene in India refuses to gather momentum.

One barometer is Comic Con India—coming to Delhi December 15-17, after events in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai and Pune.

"The first Comic Con I ever went to was in one corner of Dilli Haat, with 20 stalls and five people dressed in Superman T-shirts," says Neel Debdutt Paul, group creative director of Amar Chitra Katha (ACK). Since then, Comic Con India has expanded to five cities and consistently fills giant exhibition centres with thousands of visitors. For big players like ACK as well as indie artists like Abhijeet Kini, who illustrates for *Tinkle* and runs his own publishing studio, the events are a blessing. "Comic Con is building a community with the focus on the independent artist," he says.

But some lament that the event is all about film and TV show merchandise, not comic books—a criticism Comic Con India founder Jatin Varma readily accepts. "With respect to being overshadowed, it's not a fear, it's a fact," he says. "That happens pretty much anywhere in the world." His advice to publishers: "Create your own space and, with our support, stand out so that the audience at the show gets to experience their work."

In India, comics have been slotted as infotainment for kids since the 1960s. Indian publishers expect readers to outgrow these simplistic stories and artwork, and have largely ignored

how their foreign counterparts cultivated adult readers with more complex storytelling.

Looking to fix that is Graphic India, which recently created an animated series based on the *Baahubali* universe. Alongside their film-inspired projects, Graphic India also has original series like *Chakra* and *Mistry P.I.*, says founder and CEO Sharad Devarajan. "Finding that unique Indian aesthetic isn't suddenly a magic light switch that we can know today, but rather a dimmer that will take years of experimentation, risk-taking and passionate pursuit by creators."

Place ACK's recently released *Ramayana* next to Graphic India's *Ramayan 3392 A.D.* and you get the range available to an Indian comic book reader. While ACK won't mess around with its pantheon, Paul hints at experimenting in 2018. A welcome move. As illustrator Pia Hazarika says, "No one who has the power/ resources to put out new books is putting them out, or redirecting those resources to introduce new talent."

Fortunately, there is the Internet. Illustrators like Priya Kurien, Prabha Mallya, Jasjyot Singh Hans and Kruttika Susarla are creating strikingly original art that they share online. Kochi-based Studio Kokaa-chi, founded by Tina and Pratheek Thomas, has a website where you can buy their beautifully designed and produced comic books.

In stark contrast to mainstream comic books, web comics are a treasure trove of quirk and creativity. The Brainded project and Rashtraman by George 'Appupen' Mathen; Royal Existentials by Aarthi Parthasarathy and Chaitanya Krishnan; and Custom Cuts, by Hazarika and Malathi Jogi are just a few examples. Custom Cuts caught the eye of Ad Astra Comix and is on its way to becoming a book to be published and distributed in North America.

Paradiso, *Aghori* creator Ram V's next, will be released by US-based Image Comics. "The Indian scene sorely needs a publisher who understands the medium, has a passion for new stories and seeks to empower the creator to tell their story in the best way they can," he says. Adds Aditya Bidikar, who works with foreign comic book publishers and has done the lettering in *Paradiso*: "I would like nothing more than to have an entire career in Indian comics. But it's incredibly frustrating as the environment isn't there." ■

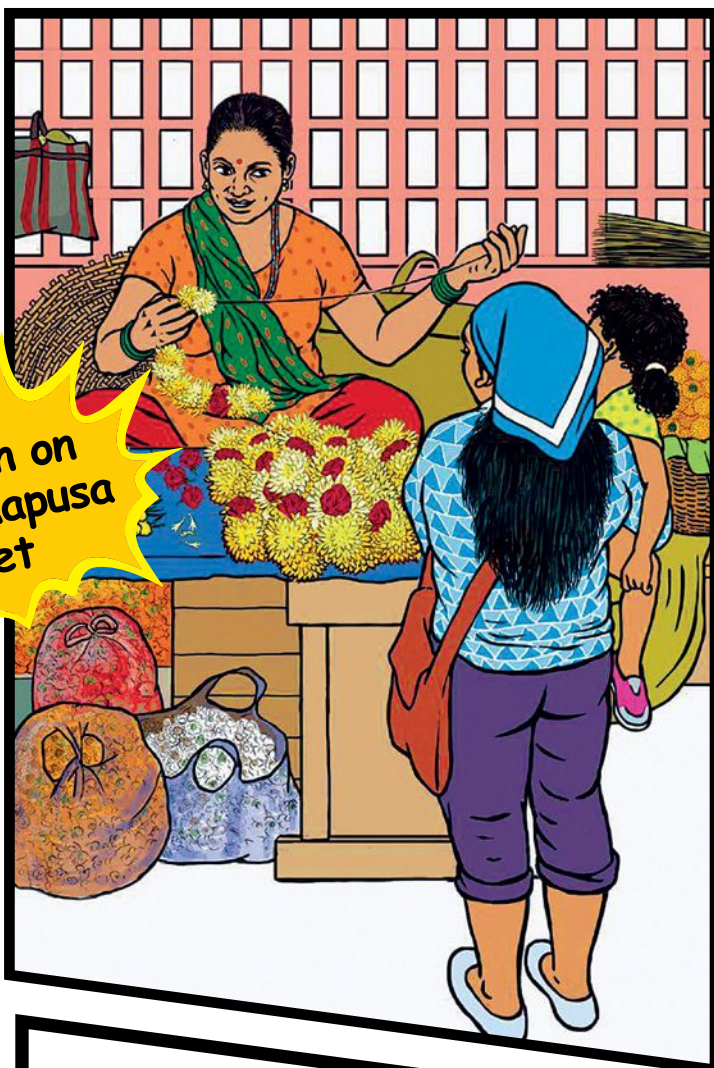
—Deepanjana Pal

**In India,
comics have
always been
treated as
infotainment
for kids**





Orijit Sen on
mapping Mapusa
Market



EXHIBITION

Frame by Frame

Graphic novelist Orijit Sen turned his hand to history for an upcoming exhibition called Mapping of Mapusa Market, which will form part of the Serendipity Arts Festival in Goa, December 15-22.

Working with students from the visual art programme at Goa University, where he is a visiting professor, Sen sought to capture the essence of the bustling Mapusa Market as a construction project threatened to displace many of the vendors.

"I've been fascinated by the complexity of this market, which is like a microcosm of Goa," Sen said. "But it also has to respond to economic changes."

The installation includes comics, videos and photo projects, created over three years. The main piece—in comic book style—is a map of the market with 12 large artworks displayed horizontally. "You can walk between them like you would walk down the aisles of the market," Sen said. "It's a map and a comic at the same time, because it tells the stories of the people."

"Growing up, my favourites were Harvey, Archie and DC Comics"

INTERVIEW

PARENTAL LOVE

Artist **Dan Parent**—in India for the Delhi Comic-Con next week—has been drawing Archie Comics for most of his career. He's shepherded the series into the new millennium, introducing the first openly gay character in 2010. He spoke with INDIA TODAY about India's favourite American teenager.

Q. You must know by now that Archie has a long and popular history in India. Does this surprise you?

Yes, we're well aware of the love India has for Archie Comics, and we love India back! It's not all that surprising. Indian people have good taste!! Archie is also popular in other countries, most notably Canada, where Archie is huge!

Q. Have you watched the *Riverdale* serial? What do you make of it? The Archie-Ms Grundy hook-up!

I do watch *Riverdale*, and I like it! I think it's well done, and the cast is stellar! The Archie-Ms Grundy thing was definitely a TWIST, did not see that coming!

Q. What were your favourite comics when you were growing up?

My favorites were Harvey, Archie and DC Comics.

Q. Are you a collector? Have you seen the erotic 'Tijuana Bibles' plagiarising your lead character?

I am indeed a comics collector, although I'm months behind in my reading them

because I'm so busy! I like DC titles, basically Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman. I also like independent titles like *Paper Girls*, *I Hate Fairyland* and *Love and Rockets*, to name a few. I have seen the 'Tijuana Bibles'. No comment!

Q. They say Betty and Veronica have the same lines—just different hair...

The girls are drawn the same, but they are very different. And there are subtle differences, mainly seen by the artists. Little things, like the arch of the eyebrows, posture, that sort of thing.

Q. Any plans of reviving the 'Captain Pureheart' Archie-

as-superhero series from the 1970s?

I think Archie Comics is working on that, but I don't have details. Stay tuned!

Q. The introduction of 'Kevin Keller', the first gay character in the Archie 'gang', was an important milestone. Any other 'firsts'

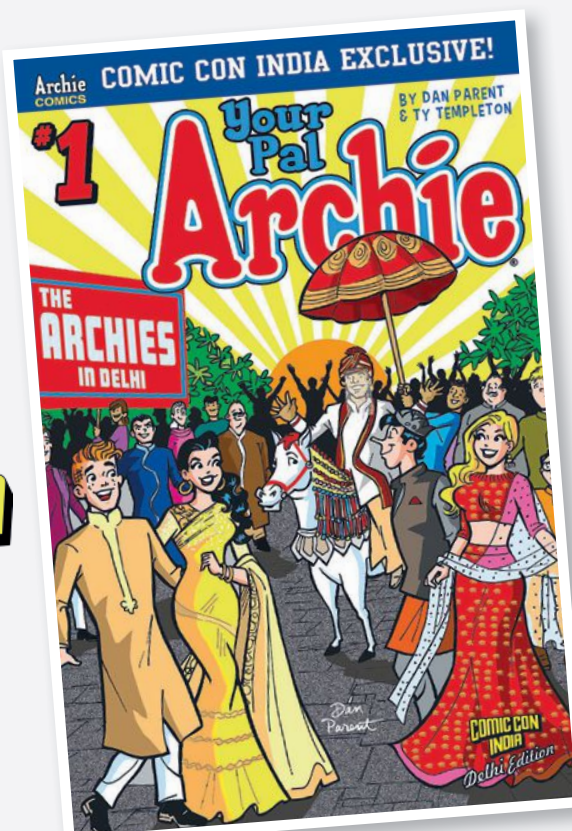
that you see as important?

We like *Riverdale* to represent the real world. We've had racial diversity in our books for 30-40 years now, but romantically, probably only in the last decade or so. We will keep going on this front. ■

—with Jabir

COMIC CON INDIA™

The Archie Comics cover done specifically for the Comic-Con Delhi edition



Comic-Con Delhi

Comic-Con India's finale for 2017 in Delhi this week will feature talks by emerging Indian publishers, launches of new comics, a Cosplay competition and international artists Ryan North (Dinosaur Comics) and Dan Parent (Archie). Some highlights:

Cosplay Contest

Dec. 15, 5.30 pm

With the right costume, anybody can be a superhero. And win up to Rs 50,000

India's Youngest Superhero

Dec. 16, 1.30 pm

Tinkle comics editor-in-chief Rajani Thindiath and writer Sean D'mello discuss the creation of Wingstar—India's youngest crime-fighter, from Amar Chitra Katha

Age of Immortals

Dec. 16, 3.30 pm

Holy Cow Entertainment unveils new issues from the *Age of Immortals* series based on Hindu mythology

Dinosaur Talk

Dec. 17, 3 pm

Ryan North on art, life and his inspirations for Dinosaur Comics and the *Unbeatable Squirrel Girl*

Archie's Artist

Dec. 17, 4.30 pm

Dan Parent, artist for the Archie Comics series for many years, unveils a special Archie in India issue—free to Comic-Con guests



A tiger walks into a South Indian restaurant



ALT-BIOGRAPHY

ANIMAL PANEL

Rohan Chakravarty calls his series of comic strips 'Green Humour', but his subject is often no laughing matter and the joke is often on us, the inhabitants of a planet we seem determined to destroy. This May, the 30 year old received the World Wildlife Fund's International President's Award for his vivid illustrations—which are equal parts educational and entertaining. But for him, the richest reward is seeing his cartoons influence the lives and attitudes of readers around the world. A reader in Peru, for example, scrapped plans to buy a pygmy marmoset after he learned from a Chakravarty comic that the pet trade had them on the verge of extinction in the Amazon. "That's exactly the kind of impact I had planned," says the artist.

Published in newspapers such as *Sunday Mid-Day* and *Business Line*, *Green Humour* gives us insights into

the secret lives of birds and beasts, prompts us to take a hard look at our gas-guzzling, landfill-brimming selves and enlightens us about the intricacies of global issues that threaten our ecology and environment.

Chakravarty, who moved to Delhi from Nagpur not long ago, inherited his love for wildlife from his grandfather. He's particularly partial to birds.

"I find them exuding a certain mischief and character," he says. "Moreover, I don't have to undertake excursions to remote locations or climb insurmountable summits to be with birds. I can chat with them through the window!"

With his richly detailed works, Chakravarty is the go-to guy

for organisations like Bengaluru-based publisher Pratham Books, which commissioned him to illustrate their new 'PhoneStories' series of nature-themed audio-visual clips for children. Hopefully, the conservationists will get the last laugh. ■

—Amit Gurbaxani



Illustrator
**ROHAN
CHAKRAVARTY**



THE LIE WE CHOOSE TO BELIEVE

Who the hell is Lewis?" "Why am I watching this guy?" That's what you'll be asking yourself over and over again for the first half dozen episodes of Netflix's *The Punisher*.

Fans of their other series, *Daredevil*, already have a healthy dose of Frank Castle's backstory. A former elite Special Forces operative, Castle watched his whole family murdered before his eyes after retiring from active duty. With nothing left to live for, he seeks vengeance against those responsible. His "sidekick" Micro is established early on. Micro's family is still very much alive, but he has to allow the world to believe he's dead in order to protect his family from the people who attempted to kill him. You get a pretty good handle on their allies and enemies. But five episodes in... SEVEN episodes deep... you still have no idea why the camera keeps cutting to Lewis.

I was able to see the character for who he was: Netflix had to find a way to sell Marvel's ultra-violent American vigilante as a hero in our real world of mass shootings by attempting to delineate a clear path between Right (Frank Castle) and Wrong (Lewis).

The truth, however, is a bit murkier. You see there is no difference, not only between Frank Castle and Lewis, there's none between

Castle and any of the other characters that appear in *The Punisher*. All of the heroes: Frank Castle, Madani, Micro, Karen Page... and most of the villains: Lewis, Billy Russo, perhaps even Rawlins at some point, started out as good.

The real villain in this series is 'The System' that failed each and every one of them. Before there ever was a Punisher in the Netflix Marvel Universe, the system had already failed Karen Page. She'd been framed for murder, kidnapped and forced to kill a mobster whose gun she still carries around in her purse. The system failed Madani. Her partner was kidnapped, tortured and killed and her new boss wants her as far away from the case as possible.

So the line they attempt to draw between Castle and Lewis doesn't really exist. They're military veterans suffering from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, who lost everything and turn to murder as their only means of seeking justice outside of the system that created them. It doesn't matter, in the end, whether Lewis murders innocents and The Punisher only murders the guilty. They each believe that their path to an improbable peace is through a pile of bodies.

What unites all the characters is their stubborn determination. Though they might be damned... someone has got to pay. ■

—David Hawkins

FRANK CASTLE
The Punisher believes the path to an improbable peace is through a pile of bodies



CINEMA

Laugh Track

VARUN SHARMA
in a still
from *Fukrey Returns*



T

he mad misadventures of four Delhi friends made director Mrighdeep Singh Lamba's *Fukrey* a surprise hit in 2013. Along with Richa

Chadha's fantastic turn as the female don Bholi Punjaban, Varun Sharma was hilarious as the zany Chucha. He says things are only going to get "wackier" in *Fukrey Returns*, which opens December 8.

Chucha claims to be able to see the future, which he refers to as "deja choo". "Normal things can't happen around him," says Sharma. The second time around, expectations are high. "The traits and language are same, but the situations are different and the stakes have become bigger," says the actor.

Since *Fukrey*, Sharma has done six films, including one with Shah Rukh Khan (*Dilwale*). The work experience and the maturity that comes with age were both an advantage and disadvantage in *Fukrey Returns*, he says. "I was very raw and there was no thought process running in my mind [during *Fukrey*]. When I got back with the gang for *Fukrey Returns*, I had to unlearn a lot of things," he says. "To play Chucha as inno-

cently and freshly was a big task for me."

Born in Jalandhar, Sharma studied filmmaking in Chandigarh before coming to Mumbai, where he began his career as an assistant to casting director Nandini Shrikent. Sharma equates the year-and-a-half with Shrikent to getting a master's degree as he auditioned actors, observed what a director seeks and discovered how actors are cast. He credits the

audience's openness and appreciation for real stories and everyday characters for enabling actors like him to find work in an industry where nepotism is common.

Sharma's films might suggest comedy comes naturally to him. But it wasn't always that way. "I was an introvert in my childhood," Sharma says. "I never spoke my heart out. I was neither the stud nor the happy guy of the group.

I was more like Zafar [played by Ali Fazal in *Fukrey*]: quieter, calmer, and one who wants to help people out."

Sharma's looking for a chance to showcase broader range. But he says he'll never let go of comedy. "It's rewarding to make people smile and laugh. The name I have today is because of it." ■

—Suhani Singh

"It's rewarding to make people laugh. The name I have today is because of it."



**JIM & ANDY:
THE GREAT BEYOND**

Jim Carrey's portrayal of the bizarre-but-beloved comedian Andy Kaufman may be his best performance. This documentary looks at the making of *Man on the Moon*. Netflix



SEA OAK

Glenn Close returns from the dead in this surreal black comedy adapted by Man Booker Prize-winning author George Saunders from his own short story. Amazon Prime



THE SINNER

Jessica Biel stars in this creepy and compelling eight-episode neo-noir. She brutally stabs a man to death in a fugue state in episode one. The mystery is why. Netflix

PROFILE

OWN YOUR VOICE



T

The Spice Girls aren't the first act you'd associate with a free-bleeding activist-musician. But the 1990s girl group and their slogan of 'girl power' was a big inspiration for the LA-based Indian-American musician known as Madame Gandhi, who performs at the NH7 Weekender music festival in Pune on December 10.

"I saw that some of them are sporty, some of them are dancing," says the singer, composer and drummer, whose real name is Kiran Gandhi. "It really resonated because I would

watch all this MTV stuff and the women were always so hypersexualised, even in Bollywood." Then eight years old, Gandhi was living in Mumbai for the first year of a three-year period that would contribute to shaping who is she today.

To some, Gandhi, now 28, will forever be known as the "free-bleeding runner" who ran the 2015 London Marathon without a tampon to raise awareness about the stigma surrounding menstruation and the fact that millions of women across the world don't have access to feminine hygiene products. But she is also one of the US pop scene's most exciting new stars—as exemplified in her 2016 EP *Voices*—and her music is inextricable from her mes-

sage of gender equality.

Her inner feminist came to the fore early. As the only girl in her tennis class in Mumbai, she protested about boys using phrases like 'Don't hit like a girl' to insult her and each other. "I remember throwing my racket down on the court and being like 'You can't say that, being a girl is awesome'," she says.

She is aware that her manifesto is particularly pertinent to India. "Men often define their masculinity by how much they control the women in their lives," she says. "I see it in relation-

ships, especially [there]. A lot of my messaging [to women] says: own your voice, don't be afraid."

Having worked at record label Interscope and streaming giant Spotify and with British-Sri Lankan singer MIA, her advice for India's emerging independent musicians is to work on their technical skills and concentrate on developing a unique sound—something young people in India aren't often encouraged to do.

"I remember a lot of the times we had to copy exactly what was on the board," she says. "That's not teaching self-expression and creativity, it's teaching the replication of somebody else's work." ■

—Amit Gurbaxani

MADAME GANDHI
Her music is inextricable from her message of gender equality



BOOKS

Be Leery

Touted as a contemporary Indian retelling of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Preti Taneja's ambitious novel, *We That Are Young*, fails to deliver on that promise. Despite some lovely language and original expressions, the novel lacks the intensity and passion of the original. The primary characters aren't even introduced until quite late.

The novel opens when Jivan, half-brother of Jeet and the son of Ranjit, returns home after a decade in the US. Nearly the first hundred pages comprise his long and winding reflections about his dead mother, his altered relationship with his father and half-brother, and his life thereafter. That gives the impression that the book is about Jivan or Ranjit or both. But it's not: None of Jivan's reflections matters much when we arrive at the novel's main plot, and Jivan and Ranjit are only peripheral to the story.

Like Shakespeare's play, the central characters are a father (Devraj) and his three daughters (Sita, Gargi and Radha). While Shakespeare's *Lear* is a king bent on

dividing his kingdom before he dies, Devraj's goal is to divide his company—cutting out a daughter who has disappointed him. Otherwise, however, Taneja's characters bear minimal resemblance to the Bard's. Devraj as *Lear* is a damp squib, and his daughters are little like Goneril, Regan and Cordelia.

Just when the story begins to develop, the point of view shifts suddenly from Jivan to Devraj. From that point forward, it shifts arbitrarily between third-person and first-person sections in the point of view of the various characters. But none of them quite manages to draw in the reader. It seems as if in the attempt to be intellectually impressive, Taneja has forgotten the need to connect with her audience at a deeper level.

Devraj's attempt to divide his empire of coffee chains, hotels, fabrics and so on—and his daughters' scheming—also lacks the drama of Shakespeare's story. Filled with banal speeches sprinkled with “dialogues” straight out of a Hindi soap opera, the novel offers the reader nobody to root for, and it could easily be 200 pages shorter. ■

—Divya Dubey

Perhaps trying to be intellectually impressive, Taneja fails to connect with the audience



Modern Classics

Launched on the company's 30th anniversary, the 10-book 'Bloomsbury Modern Classics' series is an elegant set of trade paperbacks with textured white jackets and minimal design elements. The books reflect diversity and range, from prizewinners like *The English Patient*, *Fugitive Pieces* and *The Song of Achilles* to popular titles like *The Kite Runner* and *Snow Falling on Cedars*. “We wanted to showcase a range of our most loved books from throughout our history,” says Alison Hennessey, editorial director at the publisher's Raven Books imprint.

—Divya Dubey



THE LITTLE FRIEND

By Donna Tartt
Shortlisted for the Orange Prize, the story follows 12-year-old Harriet's quest to find her brother's murderer. But what begins as a game soon turns sinister...

SNOW FALLING ON CEDARS

By David Guterson
A fisherman is found murdered on a boat off the coast of a fictional North-American island, San Piedro. A Japanese-American resident stands accused...



THE KITE RUNNER

By Khaled Hosseini
In Afghanistan in 1975, 12-year-old Amir is waiting for his best friend Hassan to help him win the local kite-flying competition when an earth-shattering event changes their lives



Q+A

ALI SETHI'S recent release *Chan Kithan* has revived interest in the Punjabi folk song

Border Tunes

Ali Sethi, Coke Studio favourite and author, on covering the classics and writing his own songs

Q. We know much about your Harvard glory. Could you share details of your musical education?

Growing up in Lahore, I heard a lot of traditional music—qawwali and ghazal especially. I always wanted to know how the melodies worked—how singers like Noor Jehan and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan could modulate their voices in seemingly endless ways. Alas, I was growing up in what we call a “burger” (upper-middle-class) milieu, so there was no way of pursuing my rather esoteric

interest in music. It wasn't until I went to Harvard that I finally felt entitled to study music and devotional poetry—to attend to them with the kind of rigour I would bring to a ‘subject’ like economics. I ended up majoring in South Asian History and Literature, came back to Lahore and, while working on my novel, began an apprenticeship with Ustad Naseeruddin Saami of the Delhi Gharana.

Q. You have sung many classical pieces, but you have also been dabbling

with Punjabi folk. What inspires your choices?

I am drawn first and foremost to melody—if the tune draws me in, I'll be humming it till I've got it in my own style. Sometimes I am compelled to put a piece of poetry to music—if it speaks to me in a personal way. These days I'm writing my own songs.

Q. It takes courage to attempt a ‘Ranjish’ immortalised by Mehdi Hassan sa'ab.

With an iconic ghazal like ‘Ranjish’, there is often

pressure to match the maestro's *andaaz* or *ang*. A young singer may also be tempted to render it in a ‘new’ (read: illiterate) way. I resisted both and approached it as a tribute—a project that abides by Mehdi sahib's *raag*-logic even when improvising.

Q. The Wish Maker is several years old. Can we expect to hear more from Ali Sethi the writer?

There will be books (inshallah-inshallah).

—with Farah Yameen

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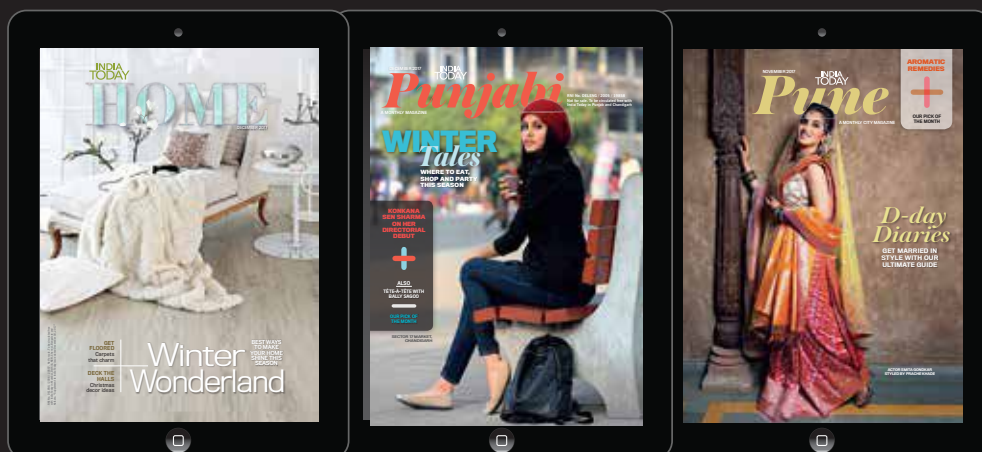
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06

Winter Special

FESTIVE VIBES

From the right furnishings in the right fabrics to carpets that give your floors a distinct look, and the top shops to pick up Christmas decorations, we tell you how to get your space winter-ready.

COVER BY MOMENTI, COURTESY OTTIMO, NEW DELHI

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Launches



iSpy

Your guide to the hottest new stores and products

Text By RIDHI KALE

SELFIE WARDROBE

Homestudio has introduced a cool wardrobe. Each door depicts one half of a woman's face wearing reflector shades, which is actually a mirror. So when you take a selfie you get a front and back view. How's that for fun?

PRICE on request

AT www.homestudio.com

BRIGHT IDEAS

The Whiteteak Company has introduced a variety of candle stands in different materials. Shown here are Stripes or Solids, a set of 10 candle holders, inspired by a pool table.

PRICE ₹6,950

AT www.whiteteak.com



RIGHT SPIRIT

Money can buy expensive alcohol, but can it buy taste? It can if you happen to check out Beyond Design's latest collection of bar units. The bar can hold stem glasses used for wine, champagne and cocktails on the left side while the beer and long drinking glasses come on the right side. A special low height drawer is provided for scotch or shot glasses, so clink those glasses and celebrate. **PRICE** on request; **AT** www.beyonddesigns.in



NEW STORE

The Maroon Manor's first flagship store was launched recently in Mumbai. Spread across 3,000 sq ft, the store is home to statement designs from around the globe and features Indian craftsmanship as well. The store is a well-curated decor space.

PRICE on request; **AT** Shivsagar Estate-D, Third floor, Dr Annie Besant Road, Mumbai



DREAMY DINING

Raseel Gujral Ansal has launched a beautiful tableware range under Casa Pop. Crafted using her own designs on porcelain, with gold accents and bold hues, the line is divided into three collections: Safari, Labyrinth and Opium. There are dinner sets, mugs, tea cups and saucers on offer.

PRICE ₹15,499 to ₹29,999
AT www.casa-pop.com

KITCHEN KING

Gamle Kitchen Appliances has launched a new range of advanced filter-less wall mounted chimneys called Emma. It comes with automatic cleaning features and creates almost no noise.

PRICE ₹26,990 to ₹29,990
AT www.gamle.co





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CREATURE *Comforts*

Cuddle up with pretty comforters, snug duvets and warm textiles during those cold winter months

Text By RIDHI KALE



A RICH COLOUR PALETTE

A mix of linen, viscose and nylon yarns have been used to create the Fiji collection from Clarke & Clarke. The rich hues and moiré pattern add to the look.

PRICE on request
AT www.maishaa.com



PATTERN PLAY

The Mrs. All Weather collection from By Adab includes heavily patterned duvets and quilts. They are lightweight, durable, crumple-resistant and anti-bacterial.

PRICE ₹7,850 onwards

AT www.byadab.com



QUILT TRIP

Get hold of Sarita Handa's Maze quilted bed spread to beat the chill. It is available in three colour variants mustard, natural and light grey as well.

PRICE ₹14,000 each

AT www.saritahandacom



ON THE COUCH

Upholster your sofa with woven chenille fabric from Zynna's I LIV collection.

PRICE ₹3,000 onwards

AT www.zynna.in

cover story

Winter Furniture



INNOVATIVE TEXTILE

Stay warm with SPACES' Hygro bed sheet made using a patented fabric manufacturing process using HygroCotton. The bed sheet keeps you warm in winter and cool in summer.

PRICE ₹4,995 (bed sheet, four pillow covers), ₹6,995 (double bed quilt), ₹4,995 (single bed quilt); **AT** www.spaces.in

SLEEPING PARTNERS

Drape your interiors with vibrant fabrics from Shades of India. Featured here are bedcovers in silk, mulmul and cotton voile with cushion covers in tussar viscose/voile, silk and mashru.

PRICE ₹1,000 TO ₹3,850 (cushion covers), ₹7,000 TO ₹17,500 (bedcovers)

AT www.shadesofindia.com



FANCY FABRICS

Made with cotton and polyester blend, the dobby and jacquard fabrics use intermingled yarn in the weave. Completely matte finished, the textiles use shades of brown

PRICE ₹700 TO ₹1,500 per metre; **AT** www.ulikefabrics.com





VINITA CHAITANYA
Interior Designer and
Founder, Prism, Bangalore
www.vinitachaitanya.com

TINT HINTS

Here's all the help you need when selecting the right hues for the winter months



Use warm colours and metallic finishes this season

When welcoming winter one looks forward to embracing warm palettes so that your home looks and exudes warmth through decor.

WINNING COMBINATIONS

Think hot chocolate and maple syrup; it is a delicious mix that tantalises your taste buds and serves as the perfect colour combination. You can use an eye-catching chocolate suede and team it with glamorous gold silk. Or combine rich cognac wood tones and mustard gold velvet.

THE COLOUR CODE

This is also a good time to add a sumptuous red to the palette. A burnt

red on the main couch is a stunner with hot chocolate and maple added to balance the hues. Besides red, greens have also been huge hit this year. Pantone says Shaded Spruce and lime are the colours to look at, but I still love emerald for winter months. Navy is another big trend but I would use indigo instead. Natural dyes and hand crafted pieces have a luxe appeal, which is why indigo has become the favoured choice.

AVOID WHITE WALLS

There is just one rule everyone should follow: no white on the walls. The winter neutral is warm beiges, terracotta, deep blues, deep greens and ochre. Walls in deep blue are trending, but you need to tone down

other hues to make it work.

LAYERING WORKS WONDERS

Layers add textures and warmth. The tactile luxury of a natural pashmina shawl as a throw, deep velvets on the couch, cushions in gleaming or textured silks, organic, natural woods and cane, patterned wool silk carpets on a warm wooden floor and the sparkle of aged brass is my vision of a cosy winter evening.

NEW SILVER LINING

Silver is the new rage in metallics. Bring out silverware from cupboards and mix silver with copper and brass to make it interesting. Finally, add sparkles and you have got yourself a wonderful festive palette.



THE NEW RUG RAGA

Treading that tricky but rewarding middle path, between tradition and modernity, today's rugs and carpets offer a gamut of exciting options and possibilities to clad your floor.

By RIDHI KALE



It's easy to be seduced by patterns, persuaded by motifs and hypnotised by textures; three things that one finds in abundance in carpets and rugs. Whether you like the classics (the undeniable beauty of a Suzani and the elegance of a kilim), or prefer more contemporary options (the feel of a shag rug and the colour profusion in a synthetic carpet), no home is complete without a stylish floor covering. Now, as more and more designers and manufacturers are looking beyond the traditional and thinking past modern imitations, they have ended up reinventing the wheel. Here's a look at what's making the ground beneath our feet a lot more interesting this season.

FROM SARIS TO RUGS

While Aladdin's magic carpet was coveted for its flying ability, Ishrat Saghal's enchanting floor coverings are equally sought after, but for their unique designs and colourful stories. Saghal is the founder of a sustainable bespoke carpet making company called Mischat Co that uses sari scarves to create magic. She founded the company in 2013 as a means to bridge the gap between museum-like floor coverings and boring dhurries. "Traditional carpets are beautiful, but don't necessarily fit into contemporary homes. So, I decided to switch things up and bring glamour and fun back to the floor space by using up-cycled sari silk, a beautiful new material which is cultur-

ally very significant and entrenched in Indian history. It is also a new entrant in the floor space," says Saghal, who named her company after her childhood nickname given by her brother. The leftover yarn is good, high quality silk that comes in an array of colours which are then hand knotted into carpets. Each time a different set of yarns reach her so no two carpets are alike.

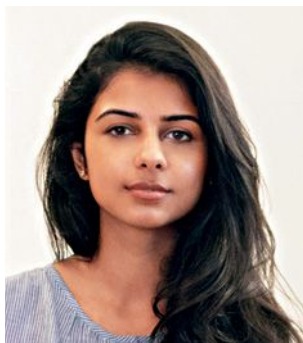
PRICE ₹28,800 to ₹3.29 lakh (it can go higher, depending on size and material)
AT www.mischatco.com

WEAVERS BECOME ARTISTS

It all began in 1978 when Nand Kishore Chaudhary, a Marwari from Churu district of Rajasthan, borrowed a sum of ₹5,000 from his father and started his journey with nine artisans and two looms. Today, Jaipur Rugs is a global brand connecting 40,000 artisans from 600 villages of India. Their latest collection called Artisan Originals, a novel initiative, allows weavers to be the designers of their own rugs and has led to some unique designs. "An Artisan Original cannot be duplicated because of the complex use of colours, random and



BRIGHT IDEAS Clockwise from inset: Ishrat Sahgal of Mischat; Carpet in Afghan blue by Mischat; Jamaican Aqua carpet by Jaipur Rugs





DESIGNER RUGS Clockwise from inset David Abraham and Rakesh Thakore; Tarun Tahiliani designs a rug for Obeetee; Modern blue rug by Abraham & Thakore for Obeetee

mixed dye batches that cannot be traced and random woven knots,” says Yogesh Chaudhary director, Jaipur Rugs. The weavers use recycled yarn, where the wool is hand spun on a rudimentary spinning wheel. So, there’s a carpet called Aage Aage inspired by the fast-forward button (>>) that the weaver saw on a tape recorder; Bangla inspired by a photograph which the weaver purchased in a local religious fair, featuring several kalash motifs; and Makke that draws on the beauty of a corn husk, to cite a few examples.

PRICE ₹50,000 to ₹3 lakh

AT www.jaipurrugscos.com

REINTERPRETING INDIA MODERN

Founded in 1920 Obeetee has been at the forefront of bespoke carpet making for a long time. Their Proud to be Indian project aims to link the country’s top creative talent with their skilled weavers. “We want our rugs to echo and reflect our country’s diverse design sensibilities. Proud to be Indian exhibit that India is indeed the

core and the heart of various design experiments, as its pattern library differs from region to region,” says Rudra Chatterjee, chairman, Obeetee. The first collaboration was with fashion designer Tarun Tahiliani, who came up with three ranges that reflect the distinct nuances of Lucknavi chikankari, Rajasthani miniature paintings and his original abstract art. Now, fashion designers David Abraham and Rakesh Thakore have created the latest range that takes inspiration from the rich repertoire of Indian textiles. It took them a total of 18 months from inspiration and ideation mood board to designing the look and transforming them into rugs. “The collection describes the heritage beauty of Indian textile tradition which was done on the borders of vintage saris from Kanchipuram, block prints from Sangner and the traditional tie and dye Bandhani from Mandvi in Kutch. The geometry of double Ikat Telia Rumals seamlessly unifies with the block prints and tie dye telling the tale of quintessential Indian textiles,” says Thakore.

PRICE on request AT www.obeetee.com

cover story

Design

TWIST IN THE TALE

We all know Panipat as the battleground that witnessed three wars which changed India's history. What most don't know is that this town is also known as the 'City of Weavers'. Panipat-based Raj Group, now in its 78th year, has been creating beautiful carpets, dhurries, mats, pouffes and wall decor for global brands. But what's even more exciting is their CSR initiative, The Raj Art Project (founded by Sumeet Nath, managing partner of the Raj Group) that aims to elevate floor coverings from craft to art. In 2015 they held Fibre Fables where 11 artists (who were given a free hand in their factory) came up with attractive, out-of-the-box pieces. For instance, artist Durga Kainthola used kilim weaving, screen printing and bath mat tufting techniques while being inspired by the battles of Panipat in her creation. Or Puneet Kaushik, an installation artist, who created a piece of work titled Roots, woven on the kilim loom using metal wire mesh and wool. In the years that followed they have held various place-specific fine art interventions and converted textiles into be-

spoke art pieces embracing global design sensibilities. "Weaving is an art and a seed for cultural evolution; documenting it, supporting it and most importantly celebrating it, has become an essential element of what we now do," says Nath.

PRICE ₹100 (per sq ft) to ₹1,000 (per sq ft)

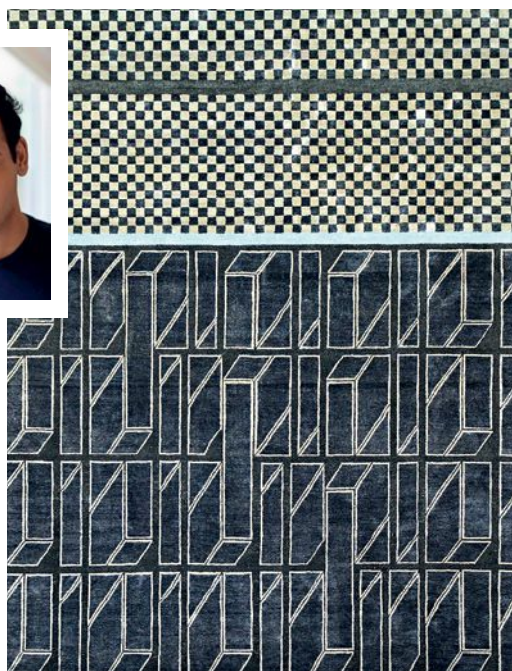
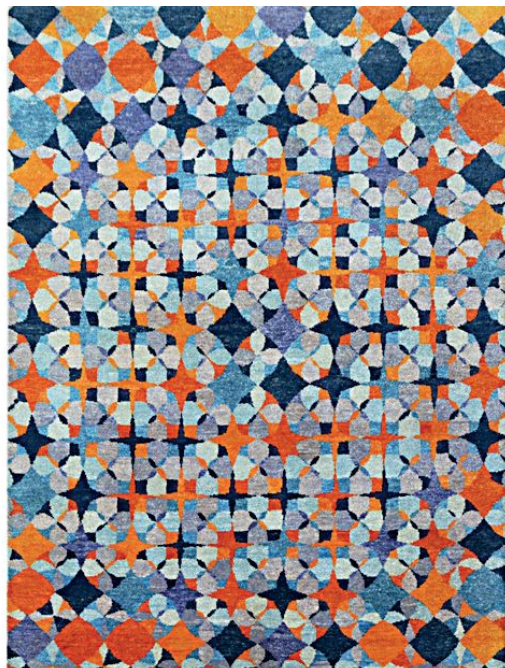
AT www.therajartinitiative.com

GET FLOORED

Clockwise from inset: Sumeet Nath of the Raj Group; Artist Nidhi Khurana's rug for the Raj Group



COLOUR CODE Clockwise from inset: Architect and designer Roodhad Shroff with his Tessellations Collection for Cocoon Fine Rugs; Architect Ashiesh Shah creates Charcoal for Cocoon Fine Rugs



LUXE RUGS Designer Varun Bahl's opulent carpet for Cocoon Fine Rugs



MATCH MADE IN DESIGN HEAVEN

Cocoon Fine Rugs has extended its range thanks to interesting collaborations with architect and designer Roodhad Shroff, interior designer Ashiesh Shah and fashion designer Varun Bahl. Shroff was inspired by beautiful flooring patterns of heritage Indian bungalows that resulted in a limited edition series of graphic rugs called Tessellations. He combined technology with labour-intensive techniques of hand-knotting and weaving. Bahl came up with the Baroque Garden collection of luxury rugs. For this he used motifs like the exaggerated lambrequin, damasks and his signature floral designs. Shah on the other hand paid homage to Chandigarh and Le Corbusier with his CHAND LC collection. So he drew inspiration from the facades of iconic buildings in Chandigarh designed by the architect Le Corbusier. These facades were then abstracted into geometric patterns using specialised computer software. "At Cocoon, we are always looking to bring in fresh designs and explore avenues that have not been explored before," says Ayush Choudhary, managing director and creative director of Cocoon Fine Rugs.

PRICE ₹1.25 lakh to ₹2.95lakh (CHAND LC), ₹1.2 lakh onwards (Tessellations), ₹1.5 lakh onwards (Baroque Garden)

AT www.cocooncarpets.com

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this & that

Gadgets / Design / Decor

TECH TALK

Whether you are a gadgets veteran or a gizmo newbie, technology has percolated into all aspects of our life. Here's a line-up of the latest products.

By RIDHI KALE



THREE TIMES THE FUN

The 3-in-1 Breakfast Maker (BM - 3100) from Pringle Homeware has a stainless steel body with a heat resistant glass. It features a toaster oven, a large non-stick griddle pan with glass lid and a 900 ml capacity coffee/tea maker, in one appliance. The nine-litre oven comes with a timer and bake, broil and roast settings.

PRICE ₹4,750

AT www.pringle.in



CLEAR THE AIR

Eureka Forbes' new Dr Aeroguard SCPR300 has a nine-stage purification process. It covers a 300 sq ft area, which makes it ideal for the bedroom and smaller spaces. It also comes with a control panel with LED, intelligent air quality indicator, auto mode and a high airflow of 200m³/h.

PRICE ₹13,990

AT www.eurekaforbes.com



CHILD'S PLAY

Dry air is a leading cause of health problem in infants. That's where Chicco's Humi Ambient Lukewarm Steam Humidifier comes in. It is a lukewarm steam humidifier that produces bacteria-free steam that helps correct level of humidity in a heated environment or in rooms with air conditioning, preventing dry air from forming.

PRICE ₹4,490

AT www.chicco.in



this & that

Gadgets

PLAY IT SAFE

Equipped with powerful infrared LED, the EVE Cube security camera from Godrej lets you see as clearly at night as you would during the day. With the EVE app you can watch a live stream, take pictures and record footage on multiple devices. It also detects motion and sends an alert on your phone.

PRICE ₹4,999 (1 megapixel), ₹6,499 (2 megapixel)

AT www.eve.godrejsecure.com



WASH WIZARD

Supreme Care, front load washing machine from Whirlpool has features that include 6th Sense SoftMove technology that customises drum movements and wave motion wash that can sense load and adapt programmes according to the fabric type. While Color 15° can effectively use the softener to avoid colours from fading and BioStains 15° can remove the toughest of stains.

PRICE ₹35,000 onwards

AT www.whirlpoolindia.com

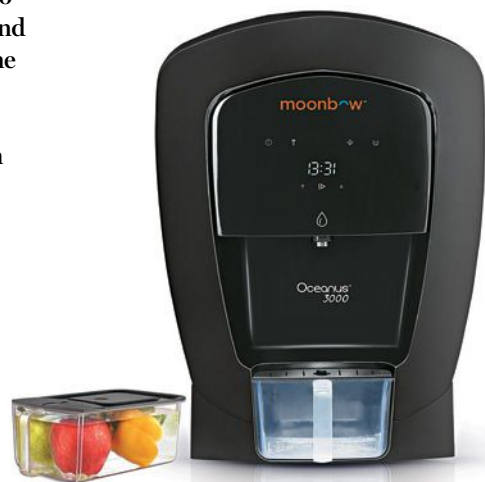


THE GRIND

Usha's Imprezza Plus mixer grinder has a 100 per cent copper motor ensuring longer motor life, non-corrosive food grade stainless steel blades, heavy gauge stainless steel jars with flow breaker and a high speed motor. It also comes with a set of five jars to support all the mixing-grinding-blending and storage needs.

PRICE ₹6,295

AT www.usha.com



COME CLEAN

Moonbow has just launched the Oceanus 3000, a water purifier with a difference. It has an advanced seven-stage (RO+U-V+UF) purification with added benefits of mineral fortification. It also comes with an inbuilt veggie tray to clean fruits and vegetables.

PRICE ₹24,990

AT www.moonbowliving.com



Smitha Murthy
the managing and
creative director

A FEAST FROM THE EAST

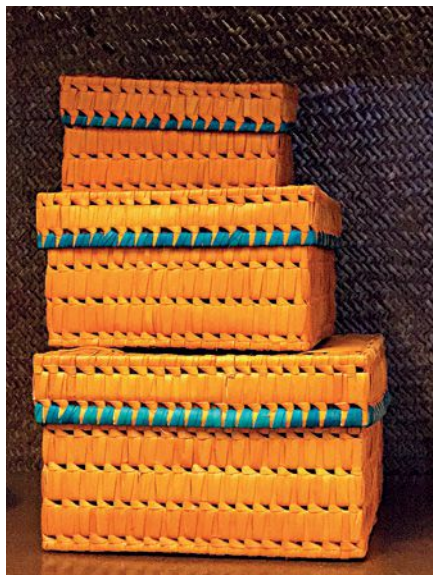
Simple but elegant, craft-like but contemporary, vibrant but minimal, the North-East plays both muse and inspiration at the ANTS Craft Store in Bangalore

By **RIDHI KALE**

The year was 2002, a final year student, Smitha Murthy, from Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology, Bangalore visited Assam for her graduation project on Bodo weavers. She was introduced to ANT (The Action North East Trust) that provides a platform to the women and artisans of the North-East to generate sustainable livelihoods and also tells inspirational and peace-filled stories of this region's many communities. It left a lasting impression. After her graduation, Murthy started working in Bangalore but quit one-and-a-half years later to join ANT. In 2007, the ANTS Store and Café was launched in Bangalore and Murthy became



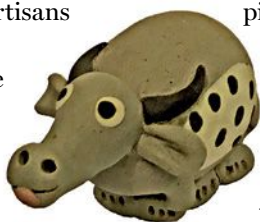
From cute
clay figurines
to stuffed
animals you
will find items
on every shelf



its managing and creative director. "I always tell our artisans that skills and processes that were once new are tradition today and what's new today will be tradition tomorrow. While we should respect and learn from traditions we should never stop exploring and innovating," says the 37-year-old textile designer.

THE FEEL GOOD FACTOR

"ANTS took up the challenge of being a one-of-its-kind North-East concept store which not only markets North-Eastern products but also works with artisans at the grassroots level to develop marketable products," says Murthy. So, over the years they have established themselves as a brand working with artisan groups in conflict areas not just in the North-East but across India. Along with being involved



with artisans in the North-East, the store prioritises the employment of North-Eastern people at the showroom and cafe. "Our belief being that they take pride in their craft and traditions and are able to provide insight into the stories behind each product," says Murthy.

FOLLOWING THE CRAFT TRAIL

While there is an ANTS store in Bangalore, another portal is in the pipeline to make products available in other cities. Their products include a wide range of ethnic and contemporary outfits besides the home line. Under the home decor section you will find baskets, pottery, home textiles, accessories, lighting, tableware, carpets, wind chimes and wall hangings, to name a few. Some of indigenous crafts that can be found at the store

include basketry techniques such as *kauna* from Manipur, Bamboo and cane from Assam, and sabai grass from West Bengal. Under tableware you will find black pottery from Manipur, wooden tableware from West Bengal, hand beaten brass from Orissa and a few ceramics from South India. As for textiles, there are cushion covers, table mats and runners on display that use the *chisami* weaves from Nagaland and in-house designs that use handcrafted techniques supporting local artisan groups. Also, there are products that utilise the lost wax method of casting metal from Orissa under dhokra craft. Clearly, the store masters the art of craft.

PRICE ₹300 to ₹3,000

AT www.theant.org

The various North-Eastern crafts that are displayed at the store

The ART of FLUID FORMS

Throwing ornate and garish pieces out of their clean, straight-lined windows is Delhi-based furniture studio, SPIN that is breathing a new life to Indian interiors with its Nordic sensibilities

By RIDHI KALE

In a world that is obsessed with Scandinavian aesthetics and a country that keeps getting it wrong, finally there seems to be an answer that marries Indian ingenuity with functional and simple Nordic design. The brand in question, Delhi-based SPIN. The brainchild of Avenish Jain and managed by family members Ashish Jain, Manish Jain and Neeraj Ajwani, they ventured into furniture design only in 2014. Why? “It was a need based deficit for the kind of furniture we wanted for our personal spaces,” says Avenish, who was disappointed by the Indian furniture market, which had products that were either low on quality or too expensive for his pocket. So they began brainstorming on design, product line, packaging, pricing and branding. The prototyping began in 2016 with a formal launch earlier this year. “We reinterpret design principles in a new light, adapt them to our consumers needs and carefully manufacture products that please both function and aesthetics,” he says adding, “With design, quality and aesthetics as given, we conceived it as an idea that would bring a change to everyone’s life, including ours. In this reinterpretation or twist and the change we hope it will usher in, lies the genesis of the name SPIN.”



IDEAS INC Avenish Jain,
the brain behind SPIN



PRODUCT SPREAD Clockwise from left: Cosmo study desk; Polo bar stool; Zegna bed; Calypso chair; Theo seater cum table; Einstein stool; The Keeper cabinet; Mater lamp with storage; Strum stool; Arial shelves

THE MATERIALS MATTER

They use metal and wood (white oak and white ash, sourced from Europe and Malaysia) to create interesting textures. “Metal brings in an exciting dimension of technology and modernity to the process and end product. As a result, boxiness goes away, which is a default by-product of the traditional interpretation of Indian hardwood furniture,” says Avenish. The result? Furniture that is simple, original and minimal while being buoyant, edgy, technical and vibrant. “We are also working on blending other materials to our repertoire. This will lead to some extremely exciting possibilities,” he adds.

A GOOD LINE UP

Innovation is at the heart of their design. Products that stand out include the Argo bar stools made from laser cut metal sheet and solid oak, Neo chairs made from oak wood and metal sheets, Stencil bed made from ash wood, Zucca pen stand and Treyo trays crafted from aluminium sheets and Curo, a desk organiser made from oak wood and metal. However, from their entire range Avenish believes that their first collection, the Neo range is closest to their heart. “The Neo range has a very sharp and minimalist line up of chairs, stools, barstools, consoles, mini-stools, and benches. The design concept revolves around fusion of wood and sheet metal minus the usage of glue,” he says.



METAL BRINGS
IN AN EXCITING
DIMENSION OF
TECHNOLOGY
AND MODERNITY
TO THE
PROCESS AND
END PRODUCT



THE PROCESS

“The entire process from ideation to final production takes about a month once the prototype analysis stage goes glitch free,” explains Avenish. At the moment they are working on creating a host of products for their new collections. The first is a complete office system range (they believe what’s currently available in India lacks inspiration and looks boring), which will include desks, partitions and shelf storage. They will also expand their accessories range for home and office to create more excitement in the world of everyday knick-knacks. And lastly, they are planning a stunning range of upholstered products to add to the dimension of warmth to your happy space. That’s not all, you can also look forward to experience centres where they will allow you to play with the products.

PRICE ₹300 to ₹59,999

AT www.madewithspin.com



YULE TOOLS

Whether you want to spread good cheer or give your space a merry makeover, these Christmas-themed decorations will steal the show

By RIDHI KALE



SHINING STAR

The Star Candle holder from Swarovski is perfect as the centrepiece for a sumptuous Christmas feast.

PRICE ₹16,900
AT www.swarovski.com



JOLLY VIBES

This porcelain beauty from Lladro called *Santa I've Been Good* makes a great gift this season.

PRICE ₹1.95 lakh
AT www.lladro.com



ART OF GIFTING

Deck the halls and the rest of your home with these goodies from Ashley Furniture Home Store available at Dash Square. Featured here are their range of gifting products, from a pretty tea set to canvas boxes.

PRICE ₹303 to ₹72,873
AT www.dashsquare.com

ANIMAL INSTINCT

Cool your favourite bubbly in this Pewter Ice Bucket from The Great Eastern Home adorned with two reindeer heads.

PRICE ₹20,827
AT www.thegreathome.com





RIGHT TO CLEAN AIR

Planning to buy an air purifier for your home? Keep these simple things in mind to buy right.

By **PRACHI BHUCHAR**

There's a haze that hangs low in the room and makes you feel breathless, gives you a runny nose, burning eyes and an itchy throat. With air pollution levels reaching hazardous levels, buying an air purifier is no longer considered a luxury. While many people feel that purifiers are psychological and that as long as they are closeted in their homes they can't be harmed by pollution, they couldn't be further off the mark. Indoor air pollution is as intense as what you breathe outdoors, and the only way you can minimise its harmful effects within the house is by using a purifier. With some many brands flooding the market and so much jargon attached to each purifier, buying the right one for your home becomes a confusing task. In India, brands like Panasonic, Honeywell, Phillips, Blueair, IQAir, Sharp, Breath Air, Daikin, Xaomi, Camfil are popular, but each



THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Keep doors and windows shut when using the purifier for maximum effect
- Vacuum your purifier regularly to remove dust and dirt lodged in the filters
- Change air filters every six months
- Don't store chemicals or pesticides in the home as they add to air pollution
- Keep abreast of technology changes and upgrade whenever possible

works for a different home demographic and price bracket. Typically, a home air purifier is in the range of Rs 15,000-45,000, though there are some more expensive (Blueair which is a Swedish brand is amongst the most expensive) and some as cheap as 9,000 (the Eureka Forbes SCPR and the Philips AC1215/20). Many purifiers also come fit with a air quality measure, giving you an accurate indication of how polluted the room was before and after use of the purifier. Here are the top things to keep in mind while buying an air purifier for your home.

WHAT SIZE WORKS?

Experts suggest it is always wise to buy a purifier for a slightly bigger than the actual as it works more efficiently. The area covered by an air purifier is usually measured in square feet. If you have a room that's 350 square feet big, buy a purifier for a 450 square feet room for optimum results. You should also check what

the corresponding Clean Air Delivery Rate or CADR of the purifier is as this indicates the amount of clean air being thrown out by it on use.

TECHNOLOGY AND FILTERS

Like air conditioners, air purifier technology is changing rapidly and it makes sense to do all your research in advance to make the best purchase. All purifiers rely on passive or active technology to purify your home and while active technology has a byproduct, ozone, which could be harmful for the environment, those using passive technology work better. Stay away from purifiers that advertise UV filtration or are ionisation-based as these are harmful for the environment. As far as filters go, use one fit with a High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) filter which removes pollutants like dust, smoke, odour etc from the air in the room.

MAINTENANCE

Most filters need to be changed every six months so that is an additional expense and must be factored in when purchasing a purifier. Whole carbon filters are more easily cleaned and absorb chemicals and other noxious pollutants in the atmosphere, the main filter is much more expensive and needs regular replacement to maintain the health of your air purifier. You can vacuum the outer filter of your machine every ten days.

WEIGHT AND PORTABILITY

It is a misnomer that a bulky, big purifier will be more effective than a small one; its effectiveness is dictated by the filter used and what's inside so keep that in mind while making your purchase.





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Fast look



Recycle & Reuse

There are two things that Delhi-based decor store Handmade World wants to be known for. Creating entirely handmade pieces, and giving the old a new lease of life.

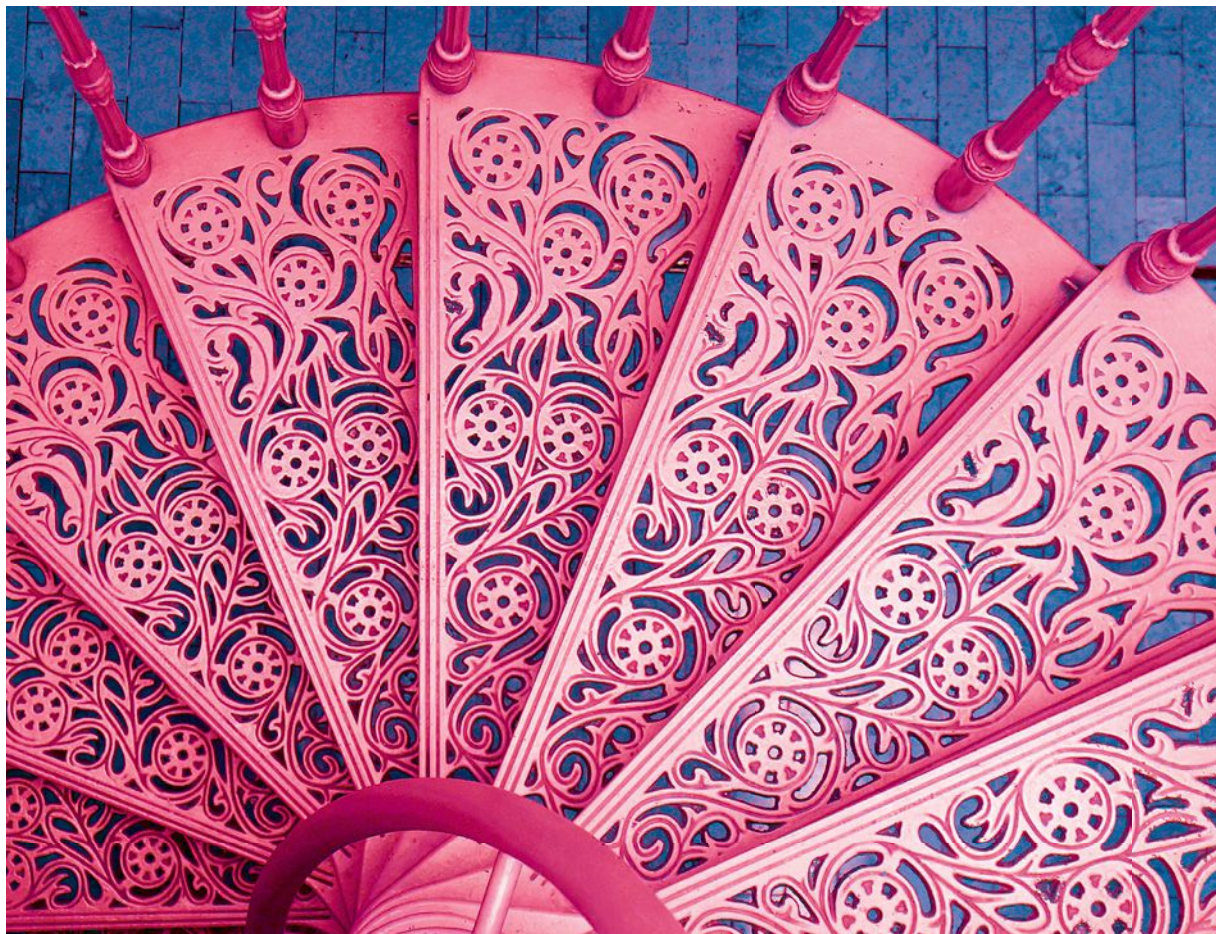
Case in point: the Funky Scooter Table. The brand took an old, discarded scooter and simply upcycled it. Careful modifications like adding a wooden table top, removing the wheels, and creating a metal stand-like base, allowed the scooter to transform into a stylish console. Clearly, one man's trash is another man's treasure.

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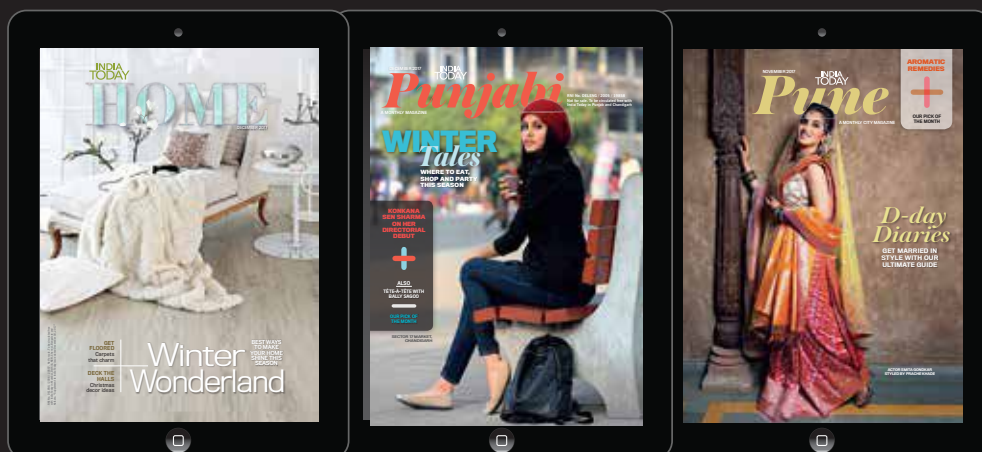
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DECEMBER 2017

INDIA
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Punjabi

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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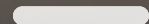
WINTER *Tales*

WHERE TO EAT,
SHOP AND PARTY
THIS SEASON

**KONKANA
SEN SHARMA
ON HER
DIRECTORIAL
DEBUT**



ALSO
**TÊTE-À-TÊTE WITH
BALLY SAGOO**



**OUR PICK OF
THE MONTH**

SECTOR 17 MARKET,
CHANDIGARH





Bridal Specials 2017-18



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14 Feature

Succes Remixed

Music director Bally Sagoo believes that in order to evolve, Punjabi music must open up to improvisations.



2

Cover Story

The Great Winter Escape

Quit hibernating and discover these exciting things to do this winter.

Cover photograph by **SANDEEP SAHDEV**; Model **TANVI MALHI**

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OUR PICK of the month

Chills and Thrills

Ring in the new year with some serious adrenaline rush with The Dirt Park (a motor-biking group). Ride a motorcycle to the mystic mountains and trek through rugged trails. The itinerary is interesting as you head from Chandigarh to Gushaini and the next day leave for Manali via Prashar lake and then start your journey back to Chandigarh.

On December 29 to January 1

Details thedirtparkchandigarh@gmail.com

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A group of four hikers are resting on a rocky trail in a forest. One hiker is sitting on the left, looking towards the right. Another hiker is sitting next to him, looking down. A third hiker is sitting further back, looking towards the right. A fourth hiker is sitting on the right, looking down at a map. They are all wearing backpacks and outdoor gear. The background is a dense forest of tall trees with green foliage. The ground is covered with rocks and dry leaves.

cover story

The Great Winter Escape

**QUIT HIBERNATING AND LOOK BEYOND
THE FOG AS YOU EXPERIENCE THE BEST
GETAWAYS, FOOD AND SHOPPING THIS
SEASON HAS TO OFFER.**

✿ *By Sukant Deepak and Preet Onkar Singh*



Go Away, Closer

This is the best time to head to the hills, considering less tourists rush, excellent discounts offered by hotels and ample space to walk and contemplate as you beat the rush.

Tosh

World cuisine and a thick green cover sprinkled with fresh snow—this is the place to go with all those books on your reading list. Not just for the asocial, this serene spot in Himachal Pradesh offers enough for those who don't like to be holed up in a hotel room on a vacation. From rave parties, undiscovered picnic spots to trekking trails, Tosh stands tall and untouched, far from being the clichéd 'hill-station'.

What to do? Make the most of your camera and go for a walk in the forest areas. Love those loose clothes and accessories worn by Israeli and Russian tourists? This is just the place to buy them at low prices.

Pocket Friendly Solo women travellers can rejoice for Tosh is a relatively safe hill station thanks to the fact that the economy here thrives on tourists. The locals are respectful and congenial and waiters in small hotels are courteous. Hit *Google* for hotels and you'll be spoilt for choice when it comes to decent places at rock-bottom prices. **Stay** Pink Floyd Café offers accommodation.

Tel 09882808668

Distance from Chandigarh 290 km



Narkanda

Situated at an altitude of 2,708 metres on the Hindustan Tibet road, this hill station is full of snow almost the year through and boasts of beautiful apple orchards. Excellent access and low crowds as compared to other skiing destinations makes Narkanda a must-visit hill station in winter.

What to do? Not just for the experienced, this destination provides perfect slopes for those who are finding their feet in winter sports. Dense forests and unexplored forest trails make this place an adventure paradise. Spend time at the Tannu Jubbar Lake, encircled by trees on all sides and don't forget to visit the Strokes farm to get first hand information about the origin of apple orchards and how they came to dominate the area here. The Mahamaya Temple is another attraction.

Stay Here Hotel Snowflake (09816192844), Pine and Peaks Hotel (09816176355)

Distance from Chandigarh
174 km



Landour

Want to stay in a quiet place and yet have easy access to a tourist heartbeat? This tiny place in Uttarakhand is tailor-made for you. Just half an hour away from Mussoorie, it offers the best of two worlds.

What to do? Check out the many laidback cafes offering superb cuisines (Café Ivy, The Mud Cup, Hill-E-Ishq), see the beautiful St. Paul's Church built in 1839 and yes, you can take a selfie outside author Ruskin Bond's house—the most celebrated resident of the area. And in case you're missing the city vibe, Mussoorie isn't that far. Fill your shopping bags there. And remember, the area has some of the best boarding schools in India—Woodstock, Convent of Jesus & Mary.

Stay Here La Villa Bethany (0135-2630054)

Distance from Chandigarh 202 km



Warming Up With Cool Delights

Dastaan, Chandigarh

It is a cosy restaurant with progressive yet age-old accents, dhurries adorning one wall and interesting nooks. A lounge sitting area allows larger groups to sit back and relax. There is an outdoor sitting area that can accommodate up to 60 people at a time as well.

What's Cooking? The restaurant, specialising in Indian fusion cuisine now has a special winter menu. During these months, the chefs will use pine nuts in every dish to us and seasonal produce as well.

Don't Miss Gajar halwa teacake, tandoori baked Amritsari fish, chai



sour and wasabi appletini.

Meal for Two Rs 1,000 without alcohol

At SCO 43, Sector-7, Mad-

hya Marg (Backside entry), Chandigarh.

Tel 0172-4004007



J.C. Cafe, Chandigarh

This cafe, tucked in one busy stretch of restaurants, stands out thanks to its bright decor, green cover and innovative styling. In winter, this is the ideal place to soak in the sun in the garden while enjoying a leisurely brunch.

Take Your Pick One can order wfrom an array of Asian, American, Chinese and Mediterranean dishes on the menu.

Must-haves Vegetarian and non-vegetarian sizzlers and cinnamon coffee.

Meal for Two Rs 1,200

At Shop No. 2 & 3, Coal Depot, Sector-10

Tel 0172 4630666



Jaggi Sweets, Patiala

One of the oldest shops in Patiala, set up in 1949, this remains popular among people across generations. Known for following age-old original recipes, winters at Jaggi Sweets is about halwas, gulab jamuns, gachhaks, hot tikkis and pav bhaji.

Don't Miss Gajar halwa, dal ka halwa, til patti roll, shahi gulab jamun.

Meal for two Rs 400

At Twin shops Adalat Bazar, Patiala

Tel 0175-500521, 2217083

Puzzles, Cove, Panchkula

With a rooftop boasting of outdoor seating along the poolside, this place offers a panoramic view of the city and has a seating capacity of over 100 people.

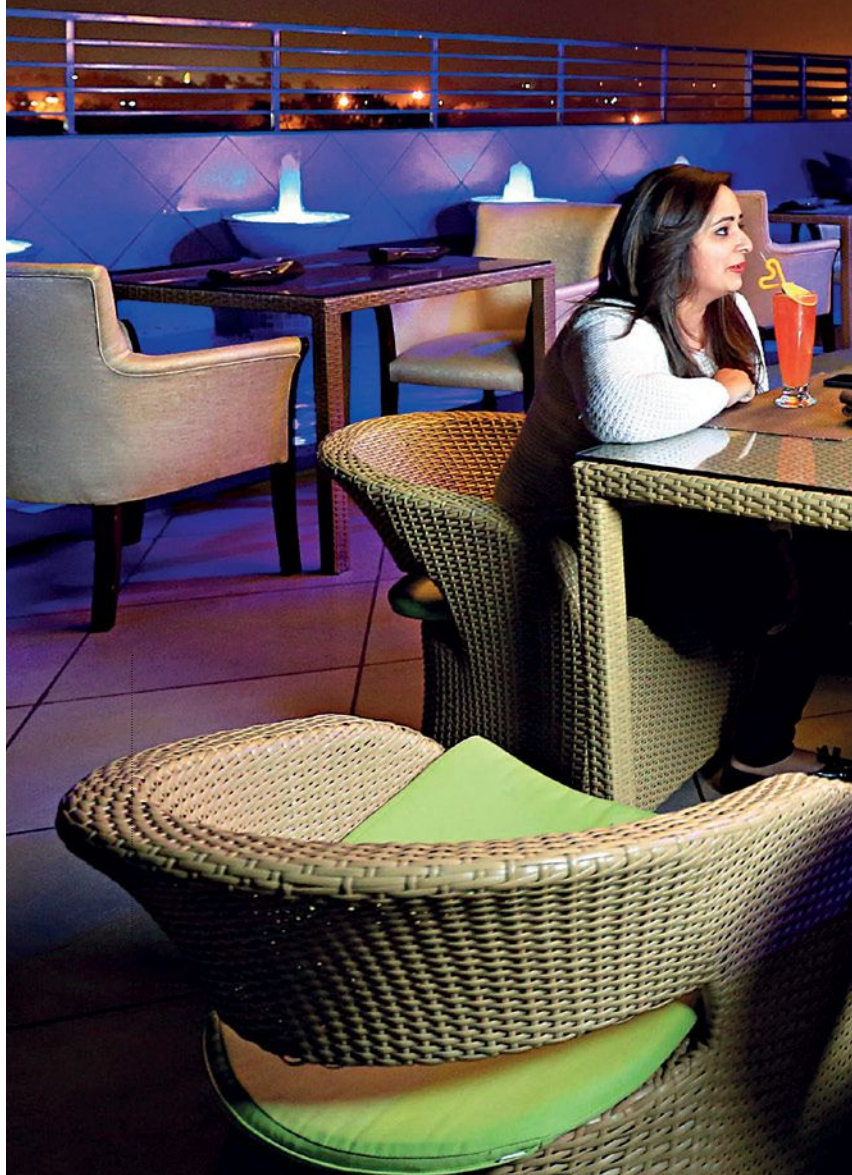
What's in Store Dig in to a delicious meal and don't shy away from a few heady concoctions. "Keeping winters in mind, we have added an array of seafood options to the menu," says Sakshi Gupta, owner, Cove.

Winter Must-haves Choice of seafood, sarson ka saag and makki ki roti, pashmina murg tikka and special platters.

Meal for Two Rs 1,500

At SCO 1 & 2, Sector 5, Panchkula

Tel 0172-2590016







Shop Till You Drop

Adalat Bazaar, Patiala

One of the oldest markets in Patiala, this space has grown into an upmarket shopping destination today. With several shops scattered in different by-lanes that sell both traditional and western clothes, this is the go-to place this winter.

Must Buy Patiala shahi salwars that are known for their multiple frills, colourful parandas, golden thread embroidered mojris, famous Phulkari and vibrant fabrics.

Shell Out Punjabi juttis are available from Rs 2,00 to 5000, Phulkari dupattas and saris are priced in the range of Rs 1,000 to Rs 20,000 and parandas between Rs 100-500.

At In the centre of the city, 1 km from Qila Mubarak.

The Evergreen, Sector 17, Chandigarh

During the winter months, it is blissful to walk on the cobbled pathways of Sector 17 market while soaking in the warmth. The Plaza is the open area of Sector 17, a key attraction dotted with fountains. This often plays host to street plays and promotional musical events.

Bagful of Options If you are looking for western wear, big brands, shoes, electronic items, ethnic jewellery and bestselling books, then Sector 17 market won't dishearten you.

Quick Bites The all-time favourite Sindhi Sweets, fast food joint Hot Millions and South Indian Coffee House.

At Opposite Sector 22, the old Inter State Bus Terminus is situated here





Shopping at Adalat Bazaar
(below left) Sector 17 Market,
Chandigarh; (below right)
Elante Mall



Elante Mall, Chandigarh

One of the biggest malls in the region that has an assortment of international and domestic lifestyle brands, departmental stores, an entertainment zone, food court, 8-screen multiplexes of PVR cinemas, a hypermart and a courtyard dotted with eateries, the indoor shopping experience here will make you forget the chill outside.

Drape There From fashionable clothing to accessories and footwear, there is something for everyone at this mall which is spread over 20 acres. Get access to premier brands such as Tommy Hilfiger, Gant, Gas, Diesel, Aldo and more.

Brunching Out This winter, enjoy Sunday brunches at the Courtyard of Elante where six restaurants are participating in a brunch-off. So pick your choice of dishes from six menus and relish your meal as you soak in the winter sun.

At 178, Industrial Area, Phase I, Chandigarh

Tel 0172-5005000





Heritage Street, Amritsar

Here, the Rajputana and Mughal architectural domes, jharokhas sporting pink facades and nameplates highlighting the shop's specialities adorn the street. It is a traffic-free zone where one can witness the art and heritage of Punjab from close quarters.

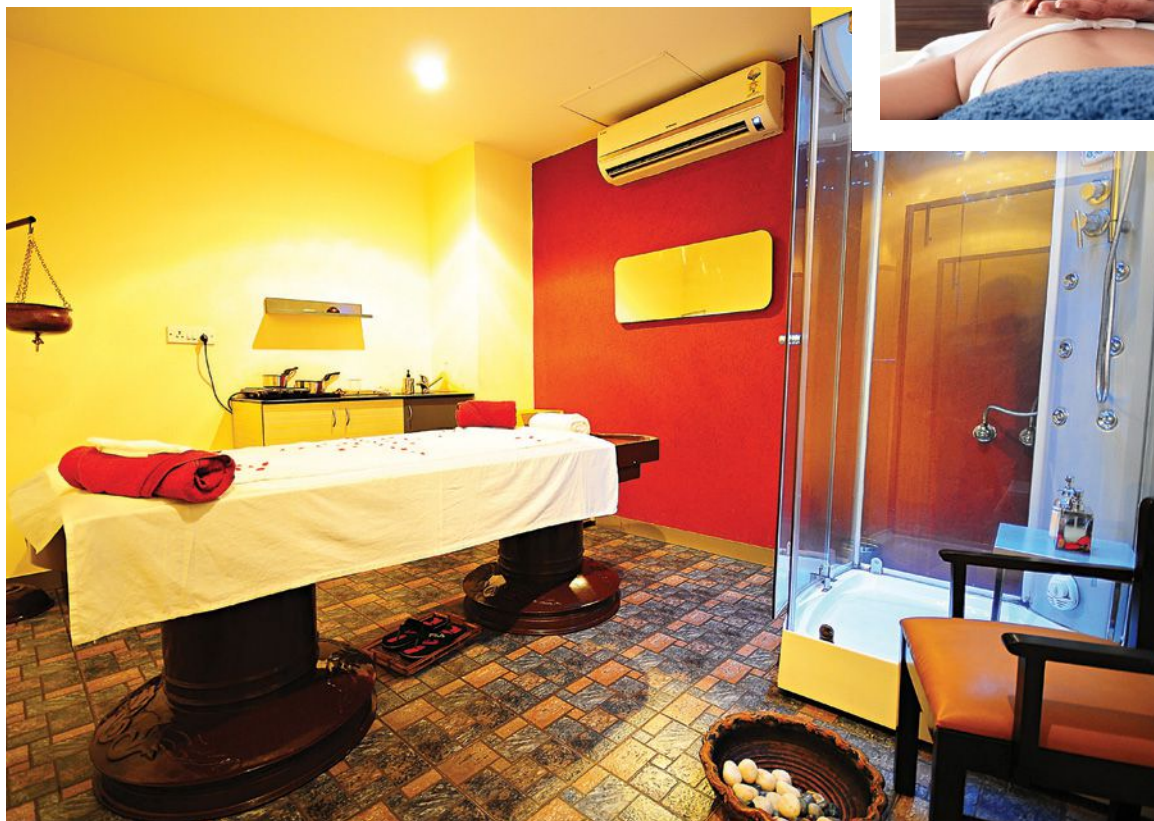
Food & Fashion Famous for papad warian, juttis, phulkari dupattas, traditional churas and kurtis, there are exclusive shops on this street selling them in abundance. Jalebis fresh out of the *kad-hai*, lassi, kulfis, Amristari kulchas and hot milk are hard to resist as well.

Empty Your Pockets There are shops and outlets to suit every budget. One can bag good bargains and pick stuff starting from Rs 200 to Rs 10,000.

Location Cross the old Town Hall Building, walk to Jallianwala Bagh and then up to the Golden Temple.



**Rest
Assured**



Blue Terra Spa, Chandigarh



On days you're feeling indulgent, what could be better than signing yourself up for a spa treatment? This spa is offering interesting winter treatments to make you forget the harsh weather.

Cream Therapy Considering cream and massage is the perfect antidote for dry skin accompanying winter, experience Nectar and White Ginger, a luxurious therapy combined with reflexology and accupressure points to get rid of dry skin.

Price Rs 2,600 for 60 minutes.

In Hibernation This therapy helps in adapting to the change in the weather. After the therapist applies ginger and eucalyptus infused oil to maintain the body heat, a wet scrub made of

coriander, nutmeg and cinnamon is applied. It promises to conserve energy in winter and helps in lubrication of stiff joints.

Price Rs 3,800 for 90 minutes

Malay Ritual Oriental Warmth, an exclusive winter therapy developed for these months, involves a scrub made of warm kitchen spices like ginger, cardamom and clove.

The scrub is preceded by a massage with circulatory stimulant oil to ease stiff muscles and joint aches.

Price Rs 5,100 for 120 minutes

At First Floor, SCO 479-480, Sec 35C, Chandigarh

Tel 01724605500





Spayog Ashram, Zirakpur

Established in 2015, this spa has several outlets in Punjab. With an 1,800 sq ft area, the place boasts of a Thai floor bed and an elevated wooden spa bed for different therapies.

The Winter Menu

Gel Therapy With its runny texture, it allows the therapist to massage at a more rapid rate, thereby creating more friction and heat.

Price Rs 3,000 for 60 minutes

Hot Oil Therapy This helps in relaxing the body and aids restful sleep. Rough or dead skin, which is common during winters is alleviated with this massage. It also helps in reducing foot fatigue and numbness.

Price Rs 2,400 for 60 minutes

At SCO-II-12, Global-Business-Park, Chandigarh-Ambala-Highway, Zirakpur

Tel 9115100936



Rejuve, The Lalit Chandigarh

This spa is synonymous with luxury, boasting of eight treatment rooms and a hydrotherapy massage bed for body scrub, wrap and mud therapies.

The Winter Menu

Khizi Therapy Using small sachets that have a mixture of herbs, powders, rice or sand, which are heated and placed on the body, this treatment is especially beneficial in winters as the heat provides a shield against the cold and is effective in treating ailments like osteoarthritis, spondylosis, back pain and muscular cramps. The treatment also battles seasonal problems like common cold and provides relief from the same.

Price Rs 3,850 for 60 minutes

Balinese Therapy This massage helps in the repair of damaged tissues, soothing strained muscles and reducing joint pains that many people may experience during winters

Price Rs 4,200 for 60 minutes

Aromatherapy A deep healing massage treatment that uses a fragrant blend of essential oils to help the body maintain its general well-being that may suffer due to the extreme weather conditions of winter.

Price Rs 3,850 for 60 minutes

At Rajiv Gandhi IT Park, Chandigarh

Tel 0172-3007777

Feature



"Interesting roles
stopped coming my way"



Photograph by SANDEEP SAHDEV

Speaking about her directorial venture, actor and filmmaker Konkona Sen Sharma says the shift has been organic for her

T

here are many interruptions. Those welcome ones. She stops speaking the moment tiny children break into a song and dance. Twice, she walks to the edge of the school terrace we have occupied to get a better view. "I love all this," she whispers. Actor/director Konkona Sen Sharma says that she grew up as a shy, introvert and an under-confident girl and was often bullied. She says our shoot should not be elaborate. We can of course talk, even about the fact that she was a drifter and never really ambitious, and it was only while coming out of her teens that she became independent. At the Dharamshala International Film Festival held in November, Sharma showed her directorial debut *A Death in the Gunj*, a film inspired from a short story by her father, and fictionalised retelling of an incident that took place in the town of McCluskieganj in Jharkhand.

This National Award winning actor (*Mr. and Mrs. Iyer*, 2003) insists that the journey from acting to direction has been very organic for her, that there was no meticulous planning ahead. "After more than a decade of facing the camera in this industry, interesting roles suddenly decided not to come my way, especially after the birth of my son. Also, the story of this film has been with me for a long time," the 37-year-old actor and director stops at that.

So, will we be seeing her in the director's role from now on? "Well, I never think or plan very far. And honestly, I have a very bleak world-view with low expectations. That way, everything is a bonus," she says.

Talk to her about growing up in her mother, filmmaker Aparna Sen's shadow, and Sharma says it widened her horizon, and her mother seldom dictated her choices. But there must be a certain kind of entertainment she would encourage? "Of course. Instead of daily soaps, it was about Satyajit Ray and Ingmar Bergman. World cinema was forever home, and I travelled with her across the globe." Sharma adds that it's generally journalists who like to add that growing up with a famous parent can be tough. "That adds to the story, I know," she says.

I never think or plan very far. And honestly, I have a very bleak world-view with low expectations. That way, everything is a bonus."

✿ By **Sukant Deepak**



FAVOURITE SINGERS

**Chris Brown, Arijin Sen
and Mohit Chauhan**

BESIDES MUSIC

Cooking

HIGH POINT

**Touring with Michael
Jackson in India in 1996**

ESCAPING RHYTHM

Travelling

Success REMIXED

Music producer Bally Sagoo believes that in order to evolve, Punjabi music must open up to improvisations and rhythms from across the world

✿ By **Sukant Deepak**

WHEN he combined Bhangra with R&B, no one ever thought that the boy who sold freezers on the streets of Birmingham during the day and mixed Reggae, Soul and Disco till wee hours of the morning in his tiny room would develop a sub-genre of music and take music lovers by storm.

The purists dismissed him, some still do. But he proved everybody wrong. Bally Sagoo, 53, made late Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan sing to his tunes in 1991 in *Magic Touch*. In the 2000's, his music supported major films like Gurinder Chadha's *Bend it Like Beckham* and Mira Nair's *Monsoon Wedding*.

Visiting Chandigarh in November, the music director, who has given hits like *Gur Nalon Ishq Mitha*, *Dil Cheez* and *Tum Bin*, insists that he always keeps his ear to the ground so as not to miss the beat of what youngsters are grooving to. "I don't feel old, music does not let me. I know what young people are looking for, that distinct sound which is indefinable. And that is why I listen to all kinds of music—sufi, jazz, world music. Of course, I love singing romantic songs, that is where I shine the most," he says. Sagoo, whose biggest hit *Dil Cheez* was written by Pakistani lyricist SM Sadiq, is all praise for the much-evolved Pakistani music industry. "Yes, I love Pakistani singers. In fact, I get so much love and respect there. It's hard to understand the prejudices that have crept in."

He started at a time when social media was nowhere in sight, when getting an appointment with a music company took years. He remembers those days as tough, the ones when he would sell his remixed tapes for two pounds back home in England. "Frankly, I don't believe in looking back. But to answer this, why is struggle considered a curse?"

Of course he is not very happy with the kind of music that is being produced in Punjab now, where guns and chasing women is forever the central theme. He feels that all this is happening to grab instant fame. "It's high time that such lyricists and singers realise that they would not go beyond a few songs. Once you let go of the quality, the latter also divorces you. And then you are doomed," he says.

Stressing that women in Punjab came forward and took their space in singing, Sagoo says that those behind the mic in this region need to think beyond Bhangra too. "If you want your music to go global, improvisation and accepting other sounds is the key. When Chinese and British music producers are working on Punjabi sounds, what is stopping us here from exploring their music?" he asks. He may be jet-setting across continents, but he now wants to spend more time in India. No wonder, he has set up a studio in Mumbai. "And whenever I am here, I am forever looking for a chance to visit Punjab. One can never ignore the call of his roots."

Feature

“Smaller films are m



uch safer”

With studios opening up for small-budget movies, filmmaker Bornila Chatterjee is optimistic about the future of independent cinema in India

✿ By **Sukant Deepak**

Under the cloud-eclipsed grey sky, she sits quietly. Black envelops her. With sunglasses covering her eyes, it's difficult to decipher where she is looking. Perhaps towards the two small cottages engulfed by woods on her right. She says she has not been sleeping well. That her eyes are swollen.

Bornila Chatterjee, 31, is elegant, the kind of a young woman who speaks in whispers, moves her hands delicately but firmly. Sometimes you have to strain your ears. Her lips quiver, and it has nothing to do with the nip in this tiny hill-town. Or maybe that is what you would like to believe. But her film *The Hungry* based on Shakespeare's bloody tragedy *Titus Andronicus*, that was shown during the Dharamshala International Film Festival (DIFF) in November is nothing like her. There is blood, there is violence. There are machinations at every turn. Every scene of this film, that was premiered at the prestigious Toronto International Film Festival – 2017, hits like a mugger in a dark alley. In Yeats' words—*A Terrible Beauty*.

This Kolkata based filmmaker, who holds a BFA in Film and TV Production from New York University and has directed short films including *Dida Reema Anjana* (2009), *Sweet Surrender* (2011), *White Lilies* (2012) and *Devil Mambo* (2015) besides the feature *Let's be Out, the Sun is Shining* (2012) admits that the process of internalising and shaping the play into a film script was exhausting and never ending. It was also difficult. "But then difficult is not always such a bad thing," she thinks aloud.

The first draft she scripted with co-writer and producer Tanaji Dasgupta was much grand, something that the budget would not allow them to shoot. The filmmaker knew she had to negotiate that and still emerging with something that

offered multiple layers. Something that could have never been achieved without excellent casting --- Naseeruddin Shah and Tisca Chopra in the lead roles. Shah, known for going beyond justifying his character and lending his strength to other departments, even read the director's notes. "Both the actors got involved fairly early in the process. Naseer even read my notes and offered to teach the bandwallah's how to march as he takes acting classes regularly. He was intensely involved in every scene. Not to mention, his exceptional improvisation took elevated things to a completely different level," the director remembers. Chatterjee, who started out as a stage actor and wanted to pursue the same, took the advice of a theatre director seriously when he suggested

that she should educate herself in a different field, and decided on film direction. She does not really spell out her process, but says, "When it comes to saying something through work of art like cinema, I can't really articulate that when I am creating something."

She feels that she is lucky to be making films in these times – an era when there is a guerilla army of independent filmmakers coming out with diverse stories told distinctly. "They are coming out from different regions and are making

themselves heard. It is all so thrilling."

One can talk about major producers shying away from new directors for hours, but several studios are opening up to small-budget films with relatively unseen faces. "It's also to do with economics. People are tired of putting in huge budgets in a film and seeing it flop. Smaller films are much safer that way," she says. Most audience members are stunned after *The Hungry's* screening concludes. They are quiet. Bornila Chatterjee has succeeded.

FILMMAKER
BORNILA CHATTERJEE
OFFERS NO
LIGHT ON HER
FILM, BUT IS
OPTIMISTIC ABOUT
THE FUTURE OF
INDEPENDENT
CINEMA IN INDIA

SECRET IN THE CITY

Flighty Encounters

Away from the hustle and bustle of the city, Jayanti aka Perch Dam near Chandigarh is a picturesque spot and a bird lover's paradise

✿ By **Preet Onkar Singh**

For all those who think that the only way to get a dose of wilderness around Punjab is to head to the hills, Jayanti Dam will be quite a revelation. Popularly known as Perch Dam, it is located about 10 km north-west off the Chandigarh city centre, near Perch and Jayanti Majri villages of Mohali district. A catchment dam, built by the Punjab Soil and Water Conservation Department to harvest rainwater and store water from the surrounding streams, it has now become a quiet spot for those seeking to get away from city life.

► DECODING THE DAM

The 19.75 metre high dam has a catchment area of 7.61 sq km. The reservoir is

Photograph by SANDEEP SAHDEV



surrounded by forest trees nestled in the hills overlooking the Shivalik range. The dam, which was completed in 2003 to provide irrigation water to the parched fields in the nearby villages is a treat for nature lovers.

►DELIGHT FOR BIRD WATCHERS

In winter months, migratory birds make home in the reservoir. One can spot peacocks, partridges, quails and pheasants here.

►BRUSH WITH WILDLIFE

At dawn and dusk, one can even spot deer, sambar (swamp deer), boar and a few other animals. During monsoons, the trees around the dam wear a rich

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- 1. Vehicles are not allowed on the dam so the visitors have to park it in the open area, around 500 metres from the spot.**
- 2. Drinking at the site and bathing in the reservoir is prohibited.**
- 3. Seek help from locals for directions if you are not able to reach the dam site.**

HOW TO REACH

Take the Madhya Marg and cross PGIMER towards New Chandigarh

On reaching Khuda Lahora (around 1.5 km from PGIMER), take a U-turn and head for Seonk village on the first left-turn

Keep following the directions for Seonk and Perch villages, which would lead to Jainti Dam after about 4 km

green coat of leaves. And when winters set in, the 'sarkanda' grass gets a golden tinge, a feast for eyes in the soft glow of mornings and evenings.

►ADRENALINE RUSH

The spot is also a hit with youngsters who like to off-road once in a while in their SUVs and jeeps. The dam also offers a great opportunity for those who love to go for bike rides into the country side as the terrain is undulating.

►NEARBY ATTRACTIONS

Guga Mari temple is another place of interest nearby. The dam can be reached via Naya Gaon village or from Khuda Lahora village after taking the road to Mullanpur Garibdas.



city buzz

• [LISTINGS]

1

FOOD AND ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment has a new address at Flyp@MTV Cafe—a chain of MTV themed cafes across the region. Viacom 18 consumer products in association with Funbars Hospitality Pvt. Ltd has launched this one-of-its-kind concept cafe that promises to be a gastronomic treat.

A unique facet of this café is that it allows people to work during the day and turns into a party spot at night. Think of the travel time you get to save by working and chilling at the place. With quirky interiors and colourful installations the place has a stage where artists perform at night. The stage is actually a truck that reflects the distinct personality of Chandigarh.

We Recommend

A fantastic menu curated and conceptualised by celebrity chef Ranveer Brar combines

global trends with a distinctly 'Chandigarhian' flavour. You will find mouthwatering dishes such as Amritsari fish, samosa chaat salad, black miso chicken tikka and nalli nihari on the menu.

The extensive list also boasts of crispy burgers, pizzas and Asian one bowl meals. The bar menu has offbeat cocktails such as Bass Rani (inspired by EDM artiste Nucleya), Sufiyana Dil—a boozy concoction of dill, green apple and coconut, tequila-based Tamarind Zinger Imli Ka Buta and a coffee-based vodka drink Jay C to name a few. The cafe also provides an opportunity for youngsters to experience MTV in its entirety.

Meal For Two Rs 2,000

At SCO 47, Sector 26, Chandigarh

TEL 4609447

■ **By Preet Onkar Singh**



2 CULTURE DOSE

Organised by Haryana tourism, the Pinjore Heritage Festival is back with its traditional touch and is a tribute to the Mughal Gardens that are decked up with platforms, flowers and lights.

ON December 15 to 17 **AT** Pinjore Gardens **TEL** 2702955



4 LAUGH OUT LOUD

Zakir Khan has been through everything—love, relationship and surviving as a small fish in a big pond—and is all set to share his comic perspective on his life experiences.

ON December 23 **AT** Guru Nanak Bhawan, Makka Singh Colony, Amritsar
TIME 7 p.m. **PRICE** Rs 799 to 1,299
TICKETS insider.in



3 SALSA JAM

Get ready for a salsa party of dancers, by dancers and for dancers. This salsa jam will be in pairs and will make you dance on a fast paced song for you to show all your moves. Lift and groove on DJ Mad B aka Madhav Banati's eclectic mix of salsa, bachata, kizomba and jive.

AT Barcode IXC, Industrial Area Phase-I, Chandigarh

ON December 17 **TIME** 7.30 p.m. to 11 p.m.

ENTRY Free **TEL** 7087420933



5 FUN & FUNNY

Listen to Ranchi boy Kishore Dayani talk about the lives of Biharis and Sindhis, how marriage marred him, and laugh while he discusses his two favourites, his dog and Salman Khan. **ON** December 10

AT Xtreme Sports Bar & Grill, Sector 22 C

TIME 8 p.m. **TICKETS** BookMyShow and Insider.in **PRICE** Rs 500



6 MERRY TIME

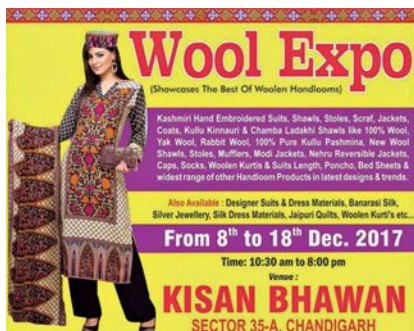
There isn't a better time to give your kitchen a break and dine at your favourite restaurants where a festive food spread awaits you. Have a sumptuous Christmas Eve dinner and celebrate the Yuletide spirit with traditional specialities such as roasted turkey, chestnut stuffing, stollen and mince.

ON December 24 **AT** Kitchen at 95, Hyatt Regency, Ludhiana **PRICE** Rs 5,000 for two
TEL 8284000249

7 STAY COSY

Winters are here so it's time to shop for some new woollens to keep yourself snug in style. Wool Expo unveils Kashmiri hand embroidered suits, shawls, jackets, kullu kinnauri and chamba ladakhi shawls in 100 percent wool, yak wool and rabbit wool.

ON December 8 to 18
AT Kisan Bhawan, Sector 35, Chandigarh.



8

PARTY SEASON

Revelers have a reason to rejoice this festive season. Party with your pet at the pet-friendly Christmas-eve brunch and enjoy a lavish buffet spread, Christmas theme cocktails and live band.

ON December 23 **AT** Kitty Su, The Lalit, Chandigarh **PRICE** Rs 2,000 per couple and Rs 3,000 per entry

9 SHOPPING HAVEN

A fashion and lifestyle trunk show titled Wedding Wows, will be showcasing trends by high-end designers. Indo-western dresses and runway styles will be some of the highlights.

ON December 9 and 10 **AT** J.W. Marriott, Chandigarh **TIME** 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.





10

A MUSICAL COCKTAIL OF NATURE AND NOTES

It's no secret that the Parvati valley circuit is the perfect brew to calm an agitated soul. The crisp unpolluted mountain air makes the place the 'Amsterdam of India'. Add in some music and company of friends and the result is as good as it gets.

This winter, head to Kasol Music Fest that follows a 100 percent drug-free policy and beckons you to immerse yourself in the cocktail of music and nature. This live psy-trance musical extravaganza promises sheer enjoyment at one of the most serene environment in Himachal Pradesh as DJs promise to stimulate every nerve in the body with diverse genres of live music booming against mountain sides. And all this comes with mouth-watering cuisines that will elevate your tastebuds and your state of mind.

Shijin of Travamigo, a travel partner for the Kasol Music Festival,

insists that the festival will be a never-before-seen interaction with music with more than 10 artists, natural shaded dance floor, secluded private farm venue with magical forest, flea market, a riverside gateway in the Himalayas, walkway through forest and big open spaces, leisure activities, live painting, fireworks and bonfire evenings.

More to do here

Opt for a trek to Chalal/Malana/Tosh/Kheer Ganga or explore the Parvati valley. Chill out at Israeli cafes, immerse yourself in the spirituality of the Manikaran Sahib Gurudwara, party at the Himalayan Psy Festival.

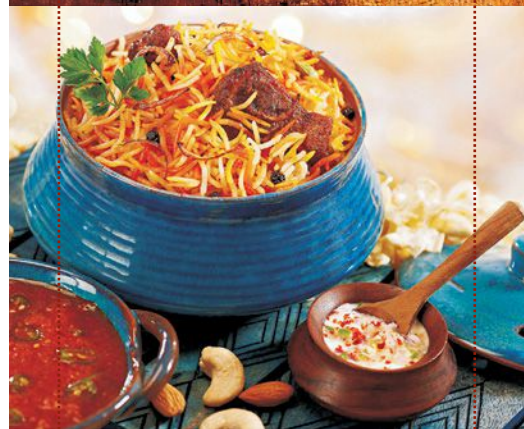
ON December 29 to January 2

PRICE Early bird pass details

One day entry pass Rs 700,

Two days entry pass Rs 1,000

■ **By Sukant Deepak**



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f /SwagathChd

city buzz

• [LISTINGS]

11

ART ATTACK

Artists specialising in painting, sculpture, graphics, photography, drawing, and mix media will be showcasing their talent at the Punjab Lalit Kala Akademi that has invited entries for its Annual Art Exhibition.

AT Lalit Kala Akademi, Punjab Kala Bhawan, Rose Garden, Sector 16, Chandigarh

TEL 2771472



12

DIG IN

Enjoy a culinary theatre every Sunday at Cafe@JW with interactive food stations that offer everything from pani puri to flavoursome Swiss cheese fondue.

AT JW Marriott, Sector 35, Chandigarh

TIME 12 noon to 4 p.m.

PRICE Rs 1,400 per head



[HOT BUYS]

THE HIT LIST

THINGS TO BUY THIS SEASON



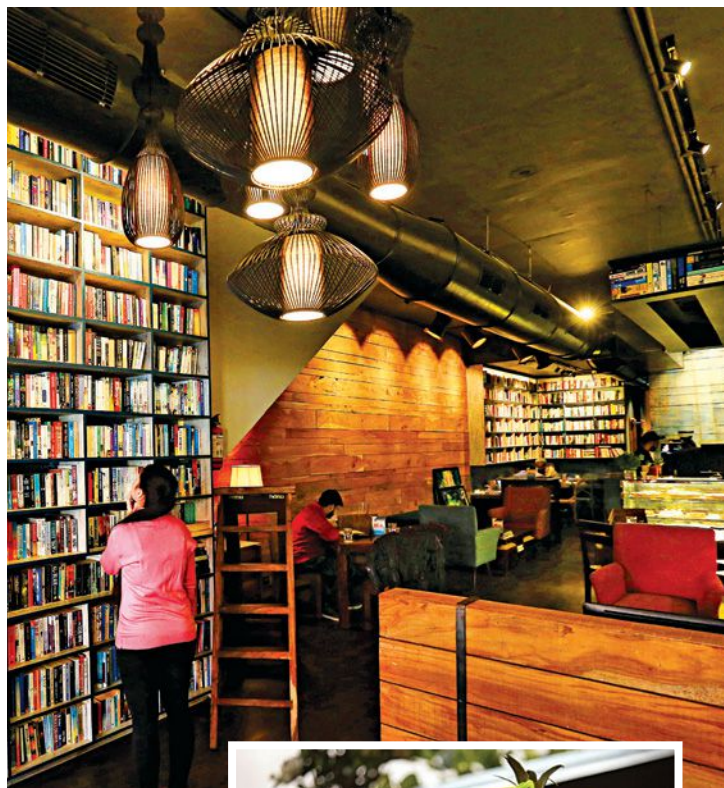


- 1 Cape with geometric border on panels by Kukoon the label, Rs 29,800, kukoontheLabel.com
- 2 Hand and foot cream by SoulTree, Rs 395, soultree.in
- 3 Amazonian saviour balm by The Body Shop, Rs 1,195, thebodyshop.in
- 4 Easy lazy single seater sofa by Portside cafe, Rs 72,400, portsidecafe.com
- 5 Deep moisture body lotion by Brickell, Rs 2,615, beautysource.in
- 6 Silver golden ripple tea light by SSEVO, Rs 9,225, rocknshop.com
- 7 Melting makeup remover by Spawake, Rs 299, spawake-shop.com
- 8 Wine coloured woven detail strolley bag, Price on request, voganow.com
- 9 Bergamot essential oil by Nykaa, Rs 350 for 10ml, nykaa.com



13

A BIBLIOPHILE'S PARADISE



The Hedgehog Cafe gives you two of the most important things for millennial—books and coffee. Warm, cosy and casual is how you will describe Chandigarh's latest offering. The no-fuss atmosphere and slow pace of The Hedgehog Cafe will keep you coming back for its massive collection of books and aromatic coffee. From drama, romance and mystery to science fiction and horror, there is a book for every bibliophile. The cafe has a bookshelf that spans from floor to ceiling, comfortable seating with multicoloured couches, and is differently lit for various zones. For readers who would not like to put down an unfinished book, you get to take it home by paying a small sum as security deposit. The cafe also caters to people who like to work in isolation and doubles up as a work station with its computers, printer and free wi-fi.

While the unique book-inspired menu is divided into chapters for easy reference, the dishes are named after iconic movie and book characters. You'll find a Moby Stick in the starters (after *Moby Dick*), and Gone Grill (after *Gone Girl*) under the grills section. The shakes are mentioned in the *Bridget Jones's Diary* chapter and coffees under the coffee-maker. Coffee fans must not miss the cappuccino tart.

Meal for Two Rs 1,200

At SCF 12, Sector 7 C, Chandigarh

■ **By Sukant Deepak**

14 WEEKEND BLAST

Daudta Punjab and Department of Forests and Wildlife Preservation's Siswan Trail Challenge, timed 5 km and 10 km, is set in the foothills of Shivalik. The idea is to introduce trail running to the public and promote eco-tourism.

ON December 17 **AT** Siswan, Mohali

TIME 8.00 a.m. to 11.00 a.m.





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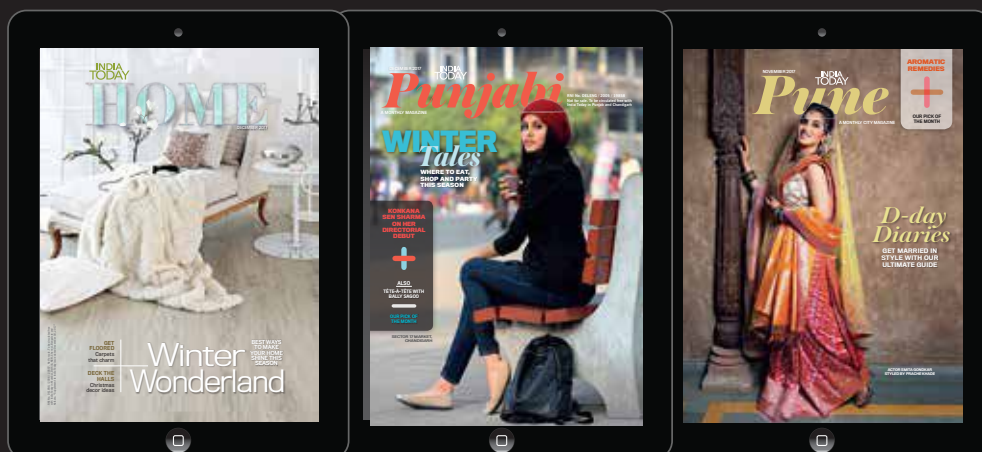
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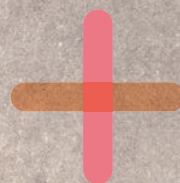
NOVEMBER 2017

INDIA
TODAY

Pune

A MONTHLY CITY MAGAZINE

AROMATIC
REMEDIES



OUR PICK OF
THE MONTH

D-day Diaries

GET MARRIED IN
STYLE WITH OUR
ULTIMATE GUIDE

ACTOR SMITA GONDKAR
STYLED BY PRACHE KHADE





Photograph courtesy **FORT JADHAVGADH**

inside

10

Feature

Secret in the City

Kelkar Foods and
Fragrances' Aromatic
Remedies



→ **4**

Cover Story

Nuptial Notes

Exotic wedding set-ups in fort hotels to candy floss at receptions, we tell you what's hot this wedding season

Cover photograph by **DANESH JASSAWALA**; Makeup and Hair **SHARVARI GANDHE**
Outfit from **KARGHA BY RITU SEKSARIA**; Jewellery **MINERALI**;
Mundaviya and nosepin from **AADYAA**

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OUR PICK of the month

Stage Act

Watch the *Exchange Student*, a story about a young Italian child visiting Mumbai as part of an exchange programme. The play, directed by Trishla Patel, gently addresses the theme of racism and biases which are often best seen through the eyes of an outsider. With animated projections in the background and a strong cast, the play is a must-watch.

Date Friday, December 22

Time 7.45 p.m. to 9.30 p.m.

Venue Nehru Memorial Hall, Pune

Tickets bookmyshow

Bridal inspiration on the go



HARPER'S BAZAAR BRIDE is available on **ipad**, **iphone**, **Android**, **Kindle**, **PC** and **Mac**.

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→ A pre-wedding shoot
by Knotty Affair by Namit
and Vipul





cover story

NUPTIAL *Notes*

FROM FOOD TRUCKS DISHING OUT SHAWARMAS
AND CANDY FLOSS AT RECEPTIONS TO EXOTIC
FLORAL SET-UPS IN CENTURIES-OLD FORT HOTELS,
WE TELL YOU WHAT'S HOT THIS WEDDING SEASON.

✿ BY ADITI PAI

Lights Camera Action

Stop motion films, time-lapse videos, underwater and drone cinematography are spicing up the traditional wedding photo album. Save-the-date shoots at exotic locations or hidden heritage crannies top the couple's to-do list months before the wedding. "The trend is to travel to exotic locations abroad just for the pre-wedding shoot," says Namit Narlawar of Pune-based wedding photography firm Knotty Affair. But with technology sweeping across all fields, weddings too are going high-tech. With family and friends scattered around the world, live web streaming of the celebrations allows people from around the globe to participate without clocking air miles. "Wedding apps and websites are trendy and this is making weddings more digital and accessible to people around the world," says Amritaa Khurana, owner, Royal Elephants. Apps allow couples the convenience of listing out the events, offer suggestions on the attire and theme and even include links to salons and recreational activities in the neighbourhood.

Details knottyaffair.in

LIKE A
ROLLING STONE



SINGAPORE

SINGAPORE IS AN AMAZING CITY-STATE: SAFE, CLEAN, MULTICULTURAL, AND PEACEFUL. WITH LITTLE CRIME, LUSH BOTANICAL GARDENS, HAWKER MARKETS FOR INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL FOODS, WORLD-CLASS SHOPPING, A FUTURISTIC SKYLINE, THE SINGAPORE FLYER – AN OBSERVATION WHEEL LARGER THAN THE LONDON EYE – THE LARGEST FLOATING STADIUM IN THE WORLD, EASY ACCESS TO ALL PARTS OF THE ISLAND FROM A MODERN, EFFICIENT AIRPORT (CHANGI INTERNATIONAL) AND A CLEAN, ECONOMICAL SUBWAY SYSTEM, (NO EATING, SMOKING, OR SPITTING ALLOWED) SINGAPORE IS A GREAT PLACE TO VISIT OR TAKE UP EXPAT RESIDENCY. COME FOR A QUICK STAY OR TO MAKE YOUR FORTUNE THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH EAST ASIA REGION.

>MANDARIN ORIENTAL

Overlooking Marina Bay in the heart of the Central Business District of Singapore, the Mandarin Oriental is a luxury hotel for business or pleasure exuding Feng Shui throughout. Shaped like an enormous fan, the hotel features rooms and suites all facing outward along three triangular walls; the interior, dark and mysterious, holds five restaurants, a sanctuary spa, ballroom, meeting rooms and executive lounge.

Gaze down upon serene rustic sculptures from the suspended walkway of Melt Cafe, then turn sideways to see their silhouette look like the Singapore cityscape projected on the wall behind them. Look upwards, and the hotel's interior atrium, open to the topmost floor, spreads like an exquisite fan.

True to the varied and harmonious cultures in Singapore, the Mandarin offers a range of dining in-house. Cherry Garden is an elegant Chinese restaurant serving Cantonese cuisine with a modern twist; Morton's



VIEW FROM MANDARIN
ORIENTAL, SINGAPORE



CHERRY GARDEN
ENTRANCE, MANDARIN
ORIENTAL, SINGAPORE



MANDARIN ORIENTAL, SINGAPORE

steakhouse and bar offers premier American steaks and drinks in a tree-top setting; Teppan-Ya offers contemporary Japanese cuisine with awesome city views; Dolce Vita serves Italian fare overlooking the pool, and Melt Cafe offers an expansive international buffet.

Executive floor guests can enjoy the premium Oriental Club lounge, with all day light dining, complimentary beverages, and private meeting rooms that can be booked for two hour sessions.

The Bay @ 5 is an oasis in the city. Located on the 5th floor, the Bay encompasses pool, bar, tropical foliage, cabanas, and exercise pavilion, all with the spectacular cityscape as backdrop. The juxtaposition is breathtaking. A complimentary sunscreen bar is offered during the day for those choosing to sunbathe in the equatorial heat.

mandarinoriental.com



"No luggage."

Royal Flavour

From Barcelona to Bali, couples are taking their vows at exotic international and Indian destinations. Closer home, the ramparts of Fort Jadhavgad are much in demand for a regal wedding. This 300 year-old fort which is a lavish heritage hotel an hour's drive from the city, offers a generous slice of Maratha history. This former home of Pilaji Jadhavrao, a general in the Maratha army, has been restored into a plush hotel with a dungeon-turned-wine cellar; cannons in the courtyard and a sprawling poolside. Plan the sangeet at the rooftop poolside, tie the knot at the 300 year-old Ganesh temple or ask them to organise an elephant or an entourage of traditionally dressed tutari players for a royal baraath.

Closer Home The Hyatt Pune Kalyani Nagar, the Orchid Hotel Pune, JW Marriott and the Sheraton Grand Bund Garden Hotel are popular wedding venues in the city.

Details fortjadhavgad.com/; pune.hyatt-hotels.hyatt.com



↑ Wedding setup at Fort Jadhavgad



Planned to Perfection

From picking the photographer to deciding the décor, the wedding planner is the go-to person if you want everything done to perfection. Royal Elephants offers services ranging from card designers and stylists to photographers and mixologists. "From concept to completion, we act as a one-stop-shop for all your wedding needs," says Amritaa Khurana. The services don't end with planning; Khurana often gets requests to track guest lists and handle the RSVP for every event.

Couple Coded Hashtags and hologram logos are fast creeping into weddings inspired by celebrity couples. Friends of the bride and groom are coming up with catchy hashtags to mark the celebrations through pictures and videos on social media.

Say it with a Gift To avoid getting multiple photo frames and tea sets in the pile of gifts, planners help couples set up online gift registries from their favourite stores so guests can buy presents that the bridal couple actually wants.

Details royalelephants.in

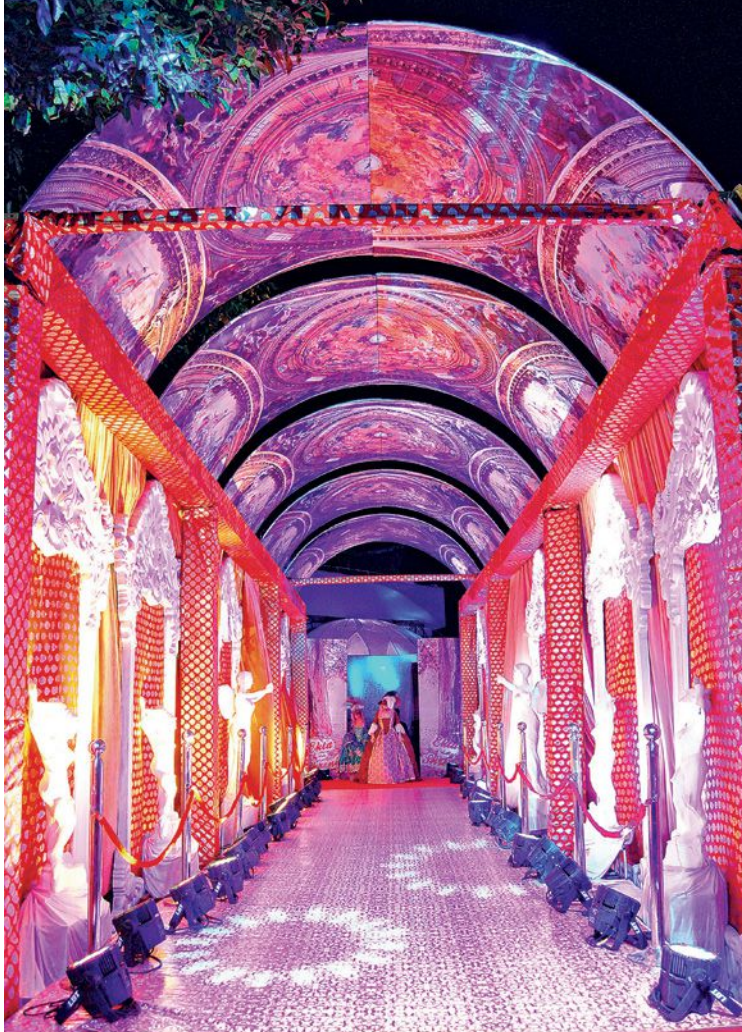
The Messenger

From customised organic tea trunks to personalised caricatures that depict the to-be-wed couple's story, wedding invitations are all about getting creative rather than simply sending out elaborate cards. "Young couples are increasingly going paperless by making animated films on their love story or caricatures that are sent by email or even on whatsapp," says Nidhi Goel, designer and co-founder of Karali Designs.

Art First Intricate artworks or photographs of the couple at exotic locations are also making their way into invitation cards. "People ask an artist to come up with an exclusive painting which then becomes the design for the card," says Goel.

Colour Palette The colours for the cards are often matched with the bride's trousseau or the palette for the wedding décor. Pastels and sunny yellows and fresh greens are in this season.

Details karalidesigns.in



↑ An elaborate wedding setup at Orchid Hotel Pune

Theme Show

Décor From recreating Goa's beachside on a city lawn to building a Hogwarts Castle replica, theme-based weddings are competing with destination nuptials for attention. Khurana says "glitter is back" even as all-time favourites like Bollywood bling and retro continue to wow guests. "Black and gold and pastel hued décor are popular, some even go all dramatic with a *Harry Potter* or *Game of Thrones* décor or opt for offbeat set-ups like a high tea party-themed wedding," she says.

Floral favourites Fresh flowers are seldom out of fashion but local Indian varieties are making a big comeback this season in the wedding decorations. The mix includes fragrant flowers with vibrantly coloured ones to spruce up the feel of the event. The flower basket this year includes carnation, rose, jasmine, rajnigandha, gerbera and marigolds. At the Orchid Hotel Pune, guests are increasingly asking for local flowers to be interspersed with exotic varieties such as tulip, ranunculus, chrysanthemum, dahlias, orchids, freesia, delphinium, peonies, hydrangeas and calla lilies.

Trigger Happy An event is incomplete without a selfie so a new wedding must-have is a photo booth with a variety of quirky props where guests can click fun pictures.

Details orchidhotel.com/pune





Feature

SECRET IN THE CITY

A Melange of Aromas



Photograph by DANESH JASSAWALA

For 98 years, Kelkar Foods and Fragrances has been keeping Pune hooked to its fragrances

✿ By Aditi Pai

Feeling low? Pick citronella for your diffuser. Got a cold? Dab on some eucalyptus. No matter what your complaint, Abhijeet Kelkar has an aromatic remedy. A mélange of aromas welcome you as you step into Kelkar Foods and Fragrances, a refreshing change from the sweaty streets of the crowded Sadashiv Peth neighbourhood. Bottles of varying sizes filled with over 90 different types of oil blends call for attention. “Each one of these is psychologically physically and emotionally beneficial because smell is the only sense that doesn’t get processed; it affects your sub conscious mind,” explains Kelkar. He’d know best. He is the fourth generation owner of the original 98 year-old Kelkar Foods that started its journey in the attar town of Kannauj.

Armed with degrees in pharmacy and business administration, Kelkar returned to Pune in 2009 and introduced essential oils at his

almost century-old family business. Today, he has over 90 oils, makes bespoke blends for leading hotel chains and stores across India and supplies to various spas and brands. City hotels where you can get a whiff of his work are the Hyatt, Conrad and Westin. Even as some may dismiss aromatherapy as a new trend, Kelkar

explains that it’s an ancient practice used in India. “From repelling mosquitoes to healing ailments, plant oils have been used for ages,” he says.

Every aroma, he says, impacts the mind and the mood differently. Kelkar is researching the effect of using essential oils in the workplace to improve employee cooperation and productivity. In stores, the right blend puts visitors in an upbeat mood while in spas, it instantly lulls visitors into a relaxed state. “Plants produce oils for various reasons from repelling pests to inviting bees for pollination. They work on the human mind and health similarly,” he says. Among the country’s leading producers of essential oils, Kelkar Foods sources the best raw materials from around the world—the lavender oil comes from France, Bulgaria or Kashmir. The geranium, he says, from India is sweeter than the one from Egypt. And the best kewda is from Orissa.

Whiff Right

Lemon

Energizing and refreshing

Tangerine and Neroli

Improves energy levels

Rosemary

Increases memory and concentration

Eucalyptus

Relieves cold

Peppermint

Lifts the mood

Twice the celebration. Double the fun



Christmas Cheer at Baan Tao and Eighty Eight

Park your sledges for a regal **Christmas Cross-Over Brunch**. The perfect fusion of Continental, Asian and Indian cuisines resonating the festive cheer.

Date: December 24, 2017

Venue: Baan Tao and Eighty Eight

Time: 12:30pm onwards



The mistletoe corner is set for a **Grand Christmas Dinner** capturing the effervescent spirit of the festive season.

Date: December 25, 2017

Venue: Eighty Eight

Time: 7:00pm onwards

New Year Knockouts



Revel in our Year End Festivities at Eighty Eight

For those who enjoy the finer things in life, indulge in a relaxing and delectable **Family Gala Dinner** with a grand buffet and kids area.

Date: December 31, 2017

Time: 9:00pm onwards



Bask in the New Year celebrations at Fishbowl

Bid adieu to 2017 with a night of pure euphoria as Fishbowl entices you with live DJ performance and scrumptious finger food.

Date: December 31, 2017

Time: 9:00pm onwards

For special offers, contact our Festivity desk on 8806 75 1234 or log onto www.hyattrestaurants.com

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